THE POCKET UNIVERSITY

LORD DUNSANY

THE
POCKET UNIVERSITY
VOLUME XVIII

DRAMA

EDITED BY
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INTRODUCTION

No Twentieth Century collection of Little Masterpieces would be truly representative if it failed to include a group of modern one-act plays. This type of literary composition has developed remarkably since its rise in the 'Nineties, in England, France, Germany and more especially in America. It is noteworthy that American writers who have done so much with and for the short story should also have been attracted by and have shown proficiency in the composition of the one-act play. The two media, obviously, have many characteristics in common. The swiftness of movement and pitiless pruning away of non-essentials that are indispensable to both have evidently attracted a people that have the reputation of being always in a hurry.

There have of course been one-act plays of some sort, time out of mind. They were represented in the religious folk-drama of earlier centuries; in the form of farces they have long been in common use as curtain-raisers or after-pieces; and as "playlets" they have been familiar to the vaudeville audiences of the past fifty years. But the one-act plays in this volume, while differing widely from each other, have little in common with any of the types just mentioned. The modern one-act play at its best is indubitably a work of art, and we have no hesitation in claiming consideration on this ground for the ten plays that are presented here.

Introduction

The present day patrons of the drama may be divided into three classes. On the one hand there are the few who are willing to pay two or three dollars for the privilege of witnessing an indifferent performance of a thin social comedy or a naughty bedroom farce, and on the other the multitude who enjoy the placid vacuity of mind that is induced by a quarter's worth of moving pictures. Between these two classes there is a large and, let us hope, an increasing number of sensible people of moderate means. To satisfy the dramatic needs and aspirations of this class, some four score "little theatres" have sprung up during the past few years. These enterprises have been frankly experimental. Their actors have been largely amateurs. And it is to them we owe the vogue of the one-act play, which usually demands nothing beyond the powers of a group of intelligent amateurs, but which, nevertheless, is able to portray human life and character in a way that commends itself to an audience of discernment and understanding.

The rise together of the little theatre and the one-act play is an encouraging manifestation. It may mean much to the future development of art in America. But if this movement is to become increasingly a popular one, its friends must discourage a discernible tendency to wander into by-ways of exoticism, symbolism, and preciosity. The ten plays which this book contains avoid this error. In one respect, at least, they dare to resemble those of Shakespeare. The average man can understand them.

A. D. D.

A NIGHT AT AN INN

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

LORD DUNSANY

A NIGHT AT AN INN*

CHARACTERS

A. E. SCOTT-FORTESQUE (The Toff), *a dilapidated gentleman.*
WILLIAM JONES (Bill)
ALBERT THOMAS
JACOB SMITH (Sniggers)
} *merchant sailors.*
FIRST PRIEST OF KLESH.
SECOND PRIEST OF KLESH.
THIRD PRIEST OF KLESH.
KLESH.

The curtain rises on a room in an inn. SNIGGERS *and* BILL *are talking,* THE TOFF *is reading a paper* ALBERT *sits a little apart.*

SNIGGERS. What's his idea, I wonder?

BILL. I don't know.

SNIGGERS. And how much longer will he keep us here?

BILL. We've been here three days.

SNIGGERS. And 'aven't seen a soul.

BILL. And a pretty penny it cost us when he rented the pub.

SNIGGERS. 'Ow long did 'e rent the pub for?

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BILL. You never know with him.

SNIGGERS. It's lonely enough.

BILL. 'Ow long did you rent the pub for, Toffy? [THE TOFF *continues to read a sporting paper; he takes no notice of what is said.*]

SNIGGERS. 'E's *such* a toff.

BILL. Yet 'e's clever, no mistake.

SNIGGERS. Those clever ones are the beggars to make a muddle. Their plans are clever enough, but they don't work, and then they make a mess of things much worse than you or me.

BILL. Ah!

SNIGGERS. I don't like this place.

BILL. Why not?

SNIGGERS. I don't like the looks of it.

BILL. He's keeping us here because here those niggers can't find us. The three heathen priests what was looking for us so. But we want to go and sell our ruby soon.

ALBERT. There's no sense in it.

BILL. Why not, Albert?

ALBERT. Because I gave those black devils the slip in Hull.

BILL. You give 'em the slip, Albert?

ALBERT. The slip, all three of them. The fellows with the gold spots on their foreheads. I had the ruby then and I give them the slip in Hull.

BILL. How did you do it, Albert?

ALBERT. I had the ruby and they were following me. . . .

BILL. Who told them you had the ruby? You didn't show it.

ALBERT. No. . . . But they kind of know.

SNIGGERS. They kind of know, Albert?

ALBERT. Yes, they know if you've got it. Well, they sort of mouched after me, and I tells a policeman and he says, O, they were only three poor niggers and they wouldn't hurt me. Ugh! When I thought of what they did in Malta to poor old Jim.

BILL. Yes, and to George in Bombay before we started.

SNIGGERS. Ugh!

BILL. Why didn't you give 'em in charge?

ALBERT. What about the ruby, Bill?

BILL. Ah!

ALBERT. Well, I did better than that. I walks up and down through Hull. I walks slow enough. And then I turns a corner and I runs. I never sees a corner but I turns it. But sometimes I let a corner pass just to fool them. I twists about like a hare. Then I sits down and waits. No priests.

SNIGGERS. What?

ALBERT. No heathen black devils with gold spots on their face. I give 'em the slip.

BILL. Well done, Albert!

SNIGGERS [*after a sigh of content*]. Why didn't you tell us?

ALBERT. 'Cause 'e won't let you speak. 'E's got 'is plans and 'e thinks we're silly folk. Things must be done 'is way. And all the time I've give 'em the slip. Might 'ave 'ad one o' them crooked knives in him before now but for me who give 'em the slip in Hull.

BILL. Well done, Albert! Do you hear that, Toffy? Albert has give 'em the slip.

THE TOFF. Yes, I hear.

SNIGGERS. Well, what do you say to that?

THE TOFF. O. . . . Well done, Albert!

ALBERT. And what a' you going to do?

THE TOFF. Going to wait.

ALBERT. Don't seem to know what 'e's waiting for.

SNIGGERS. It's a nasty place.

ALBERT. It's getting silly, Bill. Our money's gone and we want to sell the ruby. Let's get on to a town.

BILL. But 'e won't come.

ALBERT. Then we'll leave him.

SNIGGERS. We'll be all right if we keep away from Hull.

ALBERT. We'll go to London.

BILL. But 'e must 'ave 'is share.

SNIGGERS. All right. Only let's go. [*To* THE TOFF.] We're going, do you hear? Give us the ruby.

THE TOFF. Certainly. [*He gives them a ruby from his waistcoat pocket; it is the size of a small hen's egg. He goes on reading his paper.*]

ALBERT. Come on, Sniggers. [*Exeunt* ALBERT *and* SNIGGERS.]

BILL. Good-by, old man. We'll give you your fair share, but there's nothing to do here—no girls, no halls, and we must sell the ruby.

THE TOFF. I'm not a fool, Bill.

BILL. No, no, of course not. Of course you

ain't, and you've helped us a lot. Good-by. You'll say good-by?

THE TOFF. Oh, yes. Good-by. [*Still reads his paper. Exit* BILL. THE TOFF *puts a revolver on the table beside him and goes on with his papers. After a moment the three men come rushing in again, frightened.*]

SNIGGERS [*out of breath*]. We've come back Toffy.

THE TOFF. So you have.

ALBERT. Toffy. . . . How did they get here?

THE TOFF. They walked, of course.

ALBERT. But it's eighty miles.

SNIGGERS. Did you know they were here, Toffy?

THE TOFF. Expected them about now.

ALBERT. Eighty miles!

BILL. Toffy, old man . . . what are we, to do?

THE TOFF. Ask Albert.

BILL. If they can do things like this, there's no one can save us but you, Toffy. . . . I always knew you were a clever one. We won't be fools any more. We'll obey you, Toffy.

THE TOFF. You're brave enough and strong enough. There isn't many that would steal a ruby eye out of an idol's head, and such an idol as that was to look at, and on such a night. You're brave enough, Bill. But you're all three of you fools. Jim would have none of my plans, and where's Jim? And George. What did they do to him?

SNIGGERS. Don't, Toffy!

THE TOFF. Well, then, your strength is no use to you. You want cleverness; or they'll have you the way they had George and Jim.

ALL. Ugh!

THE TOFF. Those black priests would follow you round the world in circles. Year after year, till they got the idol's eye. And if we died with it, they'd follow our grandchildren. That fool thinks he can escape from men like that by running round three streets in the town of Hull.

ALBERT. God's truth, *you* 'aven't escaped them because they're *'ere.*

THE TOFF. So I supposed.

ALBERT. You *supposed!*

THE TOFF. Yes, I believe there's no announcement in the Society papers. But I took this country seat especially to receive them. There's plenty of room if you dig, it is pleasantly situated, and, what is more important, it is in a very quiet neighborhood. So I am at home to them this afternoon.

BILL. Well, *you're* a deep one.

THE TOFF. And remember, you've only my wits between you and death, and don't put your futile plans against those of an educated gentleman.

ALBERT. If you're a gentleman, why don't you go about among gentlemen instead of the likes of us?

THE TOFF. Because I was too clever for them as I am too clever for you.

ALBERT. Too clever for them?

THE TOFF. I never lost a game of cards in my life

BILL. You never lost a game?

THE TOFF. Not when there was money in it.

BILL. Well, well!

THE TOFF. Have a game of poker?

ALL. No, thanks.

THE TOFF. Then do as you're told.

BILL. All right, Toffy.

SNIGGERS. I saw something just then. Hadn't we better draw the curtains?

THE TOFF. No.

SNIGGERS. What?

THE TOFF. Don't draw the curtains.

SNIGGERS. O, all right.

BILL. But, Toffy, they can see us. One doesn't let the enemy do that. I don't see why . . .

THE TOFF. No, of course you don't.

BILL. O, all right, Toffy. [*All begin to pull out revolvers.*]

THE TOFF [*putting his own away*]. No revolvers, please.

ALBERT. Why not?

THE TOFF. Because I don't want any noise at my party. We might get guests that hadn't been invited. *Knives* are a different matter. [*All draw knives.* THE TOFF *signs to them not to draw them yet.* TOFFY *has already taken back his ruby.*]

BILL. I think they're coming, Toffy.

THE TOFF. Not yet.

ALBERT. When will they come?

THE TOFF. When I am quite ready to receive them. Not before.

SNIGGERS. I should like to get this over.

THE TOFF. Should you? Then we'll have them now.

SNIGGERS. Now?

THE TOFF. Yes. Listen to me. You shall do as you see me do. You will all pretend to go out. I'll show you how. I've got the ruby. When they see me alone they will come for their idol's eye.

BILL. How can they tell like this which of us has it?

THE TOFF. I confess I don't know, but they seem to.

SNIGGERS. What will you do when they come in?

THE TOFF. I shall do nothing.

SNIGGERS. What?

THE TOFF. They will creep up behind me. Then, my friends, Sniggers and Bill and Albert, who gave them the slip, will do what they can.

BILL. All right, Toffy. Trust us.

THE TOFF. If you're a little slow, you will see enacted the cheerful spectacle that accompanied the demise of Jim.

SNIGGERS. Don't, Toffy. We'll be there, all right.

THE TOFF. Very well. Now watch me. [*He goes past the windows to the inner door R. He opens it inwards, then under cover of the open door, he slips down on his knee and closes it, remaining on the inside, appearing to have gone out. He signs to the others, who understand. Then he appears to reënter in the same manner.*]

THE TOFF. Now, I shall sit with my back to

the door. You go out one by one, so far as our friends can make out. Crouch very low to be on the safe side. They mustn't see you through the window. [BILL *makes his sham exit.*]

THE TOFF. Remember, no revolvers. The police are, I believe, proverbially inquisitive. [*The other two follow* BILL. *All three are now crouching inside the door R.* THE TOFF *puts the ruby beside him on the table. He lights a cigarette. The door at the back opens so slowly that you can hardly say at what moment it began.* THE TOFF *picks up his paper. A native of India wriggles along the floor ever so slowly, seeking cover from chairs. He moves L. where* THE TOFF *is. The three sailors are R.* SNIGGERS *and* ALBERT *lean forward.* BILL'S *arm keeps them back. An arm-chair had better conceal them from the Indian. The black Priest nears* THE TOFF. *Bill watches to see if any more are coming. Then he leaps forward alone—he has taken his boots off—and knifes the Priest. The Priest tries to shout but* BILL'S *left hand is over his mouth.* THE TOFF *continues to read his sporting paper. He never looks around.*]

BILL [*sotto voce*]. There's only one, Toffy. What shall we do?

THE TOFF [*without turning his head*]. Only one?

BILL. Yes.

THE TOFF. Wait a moment. Let me think. [*Still apparently absorbed in his paper.*] Ah, yes. You go back, Bill. We must attract another guest. . . . . Now, are you ready?

BILL. Yes.

THE TOFF. All right. You shall now see my

demise at my Yorkshire residence. You must receive guests for me. [*He leaps up in full view of the window, flings up both arms and falls to the floor near the dead Priest.*] Now, be ready. [*His eyes close. There is a long pause. Again the door opens, very, very slowly. Another priest creeps in. He has three golden spots upon his forehead. He looks round, then he creeps up to his companion and turns him over and looks inside of his clenched hands. Then he looks at the recumbent* TOFF. *Then he creeps toward him.* BILL *slips after him and knifes him like the other with his left hand over his mouth.*]

BILL [*sotto voce.*] We've only got two, Toffy.

THE TOFF. Still another.

BILL. What'll we do?

THE TOFF [*sitting up*]. Hum.

BILL. This is the best way, much.

THE TOFF. Out of the question. Never play the same game twice.

BILL. Why not, Toffy?

THE TOFF. Doesn't work if you do.

BILL. Well?

THE TOFF. I have it, Albert. You will now walk into the room. I showed you how to do it.

ALBERT. Yes.

THE TOFF. Just run over here and have a fight at this window with these two men

ALBERT. But they're . . .

THE TOFF. Yes, they're dead, my perspicuous Albert. But Bill and I are going to resuscitate them. . . . Come on. [BILL *picks up a body under the arms.*]

THE TOFF. That's right, Bill. [*Does the same.*] Come and help us, Sniggers. . . . [SNIGGERS *comes.*] Keep low, keep low. Wave their arms about, Sniggers. Don't show yourself. Now, Albert, over you go. Our Albert is slain. Back you get, Bill. Back, Sniggers. Still, Albert. Mustn't move when he comes. Not a muscle. [*A face appears at the window and stays for some time. Then the door opens and, looking craftily round, the third Priest enters. He looks at his companions' bodies and turns round. He suspects something. He takes up one of the knives and with a knife in each hand he puts his back to the wall. He looks to the left and right.*]

THE TOFF. Come on, Bill. [*The Priest rushes to the door.* THE TOFF *knifes the last Priest from behind.*]

THE TOFF. A good day's work, my friends.

BILL. Well done, Toffy. Oh, you are a deep one!

ALBERT. A deep one if ever there was one.

SNIGGERS. There ain't any more, Bill, are there?

THE TOFF. No more in the world, my friend.

BILL. Aye, that's all there are. There were only three in the temple. Three priests and their beastly idol.

ALBERT. What is it worth, Toffy? Is it worth a thousand pounds?

THE TOFF. It's worth all they've got in the shop. Worth just whatever we like to ask for it.

ALBERT. Then we're millionaires now.

THE TOFF. Yes, and, what is more important, we no longer have any heirs.

BILL. We'll have to sell it now.

ALBERT. That won't be easy. It's a pity it isn't small and we had half a dozen. Hadn't the idol any other on him?

BILL. No, he was green jade all over and only had this one eye. He had it in the middle of his forehead and was a long sight uglier than anything else in the world.

SNIGGERS. I'm sure we ought all to be very grateful to Toffy.

BILL. And, indeed, we ought.

ALBERT. If it hadn't been for him . . .

BILL. Yes, if it hadn't been for old Toffy . . .

SNIGGERS. He's a deep one.

THE TOFF. Well, you see I just have a knack of foreseeing things.

SNIGGERS. I should think you did.

BILL. Why, I don't suppose anything happens that our Toff doesn't foresee. Does it, Toffy?

THE TOFF. Well, I don't think it does, Bill. I don't think it often does.

BILL. Life is no more than just a game of cards to our old Toff.

THE TOFF. Well, we've taken these fellows' trick.

SNIGGERS [*going to window*]. It wouldn't do for anyone to see them.

THE TOFF. Oh, nobody will come this way. We're all alone on a moor.

BILL. Where will we put them?

THE TOFF. Bury them in the cellar, but there's no hurry.

BILL. And what then, Toffy?

THE TOFF. Why, then we'll go to London and upset the ruby business. We have really come through this job very nicely.

BILL. I think the first thing that we ought to do is to give a little supper to old Toffy. We'll bury these fellows to-night.

ALBERT. Yes, let's.

SNIGGERS. The very thing!

BILL. And we'll all drink his health.

ALBERT. Good old Toffy!

SNIGGERS. He ought to have been a general or a premier. [*They get bottles from cupboard, etc.*]

THE TOFF. Well, we've earned our bit of a supper. [*They sit down.*]

BILL [*glass in hand*]. Here's to old Toffy, who guessed everything!

ALBERT *and* SNIGGERS. Good old Toffy!

BILL. Toffy, who saved our lives and made our fortunes.

ALBERT *and* SNIGGERS. Hear! Hear!

THE TOFF. And here's to Bill, who saved me twice to-night.

BILL. Couldn't have done it but for your cleverness, Toffy.

SNIGGERS. Hear, hear! Hear! Hear!

ALBERT. He foresees everything.

BILL. A speech, Toffy. A speech from our general.

ALL. Yes, a speech.

SNIGGERS. A speech.

THE TOFF. Well, get me some water. This

whisky's too much for my head, and I must keep it clear till our friends are safe in the cellar.

BILL. Water? Yes, of course. Get him some water, Sniggers.

SNIGGERS. We don't use water here. Where shall I get it?

BILL. Outside in the garden. [*Exit* SNIGGERS.]

ALBERT. Here's to future!

BILL. Here's to Albert Thomas, Esquire.

ALBERT. And William Jones, Esquire. [*Re enter* SNIGGERS, *terrified.*]

THE TOFF. Hullo, here's Jacob Smith, Esquire, J. P., alias Sniggers, back again.

SNIGGERS. Toffy, I've been thinking about my share in that ruby. I don't want it, Toffy; I don't want it.

THE TOFF. Nonsense, Sniggers. Nonsense.

SNIGGERS. You shall have it, Toffy, you shall have it yourself, only say Sniggers has no share in this 'ere ruby. Say it, Toffy, say it!

BILL. Want to turn informer, Sniggers?

SNIGGERS. No, no. Only I don't want the Ruby, Toffy. . . .

THE TOFF. No more nonsense, Sniggers. We're all in together in this. If one hangs, we all hang; but they won't outwit me. Besides, it's not a hanging affair, they had their knives.

SNIGGERS. Toffy, Toffy, I always treated you fair, Toffy. I was always one to say, Give Toffy a chance. Take back my share, Toffy.

THE TOFF. What's the matter? What are you driving at?

SNIGGERS. Take it back, Toffy.

THE TOFF. Answer me, what are you up to?

SNIGGERS. I don't want my share any more.

BILL. Have you seen the police? (ALBERT *pulls out his knife.*]

THE TOFF. No, no knives. Albert.

ALBERT. What then?

THE TOFF. The honest truth in open court, barring the ruby. We were attacked.

SNIGGERS. There's no police.

THE TOFF. Well, then, what's the matter?

BILL. Out with it.

SNIGGERS. I swear to God. . . .

ALBERT. Well?

THE TOFF. Don't interrupt.

SNIGGERS. I swear I saw something *what I didn't like.*

THE TOFF. What you didn't like?

SNIGGERS [*in tears*]. O Toffy, Toffy, take it back. Take my share. Say you take it.

THE TOFF. What has he seen? [*Dead silence, only broken by* SNIGGERS'S *sobs. Then steps are heard. Enter a hideous idol. It is blind and gropes its way. It gropes its way to the ruby and picks it up and screws it into a socket in the forehead.* SNIGGERS *still weeps softly, the rest stare in horror. The idol steps out, not groping. Its steps move off, then stop.*]

THE TOFF. O, great heavens!

ALBERT [*in a childish plaintive voice*]. What is it, Toffy?

BILL. Albert, it is that obscene idol [*in a whisper*] come from India.

ALBERT. It is gone.

BILL. It has taken its eye.

SNIGGERS. We are saved.

A VOICE OFF [*with outlandish accent*]. Meestaire William Jones, Able Seaman. [THE TOFF *has never spoken, never moved. He only gazes stupidly in horror.*]

BILL. Albert, Albert, what is this? [*He rises and walks out. One moan is heard.* SNIGGERS *goes to the window. He falls back sickly.*]

ALBERT [*in a whisper*]. What has happened?

SNIGGERS. I have seen it. I have seen it. O, I have seen it! [*He returns to table.*]

THE TOFF [*laying his hand very gently on* SNIGGERS'S *arm, speaking softly and winningly.*] What was it, Sniggers?

SNIGGERS. I have seen it.

ALBERT. What?

SNIGGERS. O!

VOICE. Meestaire Albert Thomas, Able Seaman.

ALBERT. Must I go, Toffy? Toffy, must I go?

SNIGGERS [*clutching him*]. Don't move.

ALBERT [*going*]. Toffy, Toffy. [*Exit.*]

VOICE. Meestaire Jacob Smith, Able Seaman.

SNIGGERS. I can't go, Toffy. I can't go. I can't do it. [*He goes.*]

VOICE. Meestaire Arnold Everett Scott-Fortescue, late Esquire, Able Seaman.

THE TOFF. I did not foresee it. [*Exit.*]

[THE CURTAIN.]

BEAUTY AND THE JACOBIN

BY

BOOTH TARKINGTON

*BEAUTY AND THE JACOBIN

CHARACTERS

ANNE.
LOUIS.
ELOISE.
VALSIN.
DOSSONVILLE.

Our scene is in a rusty lodging-house of the Lower Town, Boulogne-sur-Mer, and the time, the early twilight of dark November in northern France. This particular November is dark indeed, for it is November of the year 1793, Frimaire of the Terror. The garret room disclosed to us, like the evening lowering outside its one window, and like the times, is mysterious, obscure, smoked with perplexing shadows; these flying and staggering to echo the shiftings of a young man writing at a desk by the light of a candle.

We are just under the eaves here; the dim ceiling slants; and there are two doors: that in the rear wall is closed; the other, upon our right, and evidently leading to an inner chamber, we find ajar. The furniture of this mean apartment is

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chipped, faded, insecure, yet still possessed of a haggard elegance; shamed odds and ends, cheaply acquired by the proprietor of the lodging-house, no doubt at an auction of the confiscated leavings of some emigrant noble. The single window, square and mustily curtained, is so small that it cannot be imagined to admit much light on the brightest of days; however, it might afford a lodger a limited view of the houses opposite and the street below. In fact, as our eyes grow accustomed to the obscurity we discover it serving this very purpose at the present moment, for a tall woman stands close by in the shadow, peering between the curtains with the distrustfulness of a picket thrown far out into an enemy's country. Her coarse blouse and skirt, new and as ill-fitting as sacks, her shopwoman's bonnet and cheap veil, and her rough shoes are naïvely denied by her sensitive, pale hands and the highbred and inbred face, long profoundly marked by loss and fear, and now very white, very watchful. She is not more than forty, but her hair, glimpsed beneath the clumsy bonnet, shows much grayer than need be at that age. This is ANNE DE LASEYNE.

The intent young man at the desk, easily recognizable as her brother, fair and of a singular physical delicacy, is a finely completed product of his race; one would pronounce him gentle in each sense of the word. His costume rivals his sister's in the innocence of its attempt at disguise: he wears a carefully soiled carter's frock, rough new gai-

ters, and a pair of dangerously aristocratic shoes, which are not too dusty to conceal the fact that they are of excellent make and lately sported buckles. A tousled cap of rabbit-skin, exhibiting a tricolour cockade, crowns these anomalies, though not at present his thin, blond curls, for it has been tossed upon a dressing-table which stands against the wall to the left. He is younger than MADAME DE LASEYNE, *probably by more than ten years; and, though his features so strikingly resemble hers, they are free from the permanent impress of pain which she bears like a mourning badge upon her own.*

He is expending a feverish attention upon his task, but with patently unsatisfactory results; for he whispers and mutters to himself, bites the feather of his pen, shakes his head forebodingly, and again and again crumples a written sheet and throws it upon the floor. Whenever this happens ANNE DE LASEYNE *casts a white glance at him over her shoulder—his desk is in the centre of the room—her anxiety is visibly increased, and the temptation to speak less and less easily controlled, until at last she gives way to it. Her voice is low and hurried.*

ANNE. Louis, it is growing dark very fast.

LOUIS. I had not observed it, my sister. [*He lights a second candle from the first; then, pen in mouth, scratches at his writing with a little knife.*]

ANNE. People are still crowding in front of the wine shop across the street.

LOUIS [*smiling with one side of his mouth*]. Naturally. Reading the list of the proscribed that came at noon. Also waiting, amiable vultures, for the next bulletin from Paris. It will give the names of those guillotined day before yesterday. For a good bet: our own names [*he nods toward the other room*]—yes, hers, too—are all three in the former. As for the latter—well, they can't get us in that now.

ANNE [*eagerly*]. Then you are certain that we are safe?

LOUIS. I am certain only that they cannot murder us day before yesterday. [*As he bends his head to his writing a woman comes in languidly through the open door, bearing an armful of garments, among which one catches the gleam of fine silk, glimpses of lace and rich furs—a disordered burden which she dumps pell-mell into a large portmanteau lying open upon a chair near the desk. This new-comer is of a startling gold-and-ivory beauty; a beauty quite literally striking, for at the very first glance the whole force of it hits the beholder like a snowball in the eye; a beauty so obvious, so completed, so rounded, that it is painful; a beauty to rivet the unenvious stare of women, but from the full blast of which either king or man-peasant would stagger away to the confessional. The egregious luster of it is not breathed upon even by its overspreading of sullen revolt, as its possessor carelessly arranges the garments in the portmanteau. She wears a dress all gray, of a coarse texture, but exquisitely fitted to her; nothing could possibly be plainer, or of a more revealing simplicity. She might be twenty-*

two; at least it is certain that she is not thirty. At her coming, LOUIS *looks up with a sigh of poignant wistfulness, evidently a habit; for as he leans back to watch her he sighs again. She does not so much as glance at him, but speaks absently to* MADAME DE LASEYNE. *Her voice is superb, as it should be; deep and musical, with a faint, silvery huskiness.*]

ELOISE [*the new-comer*]. Is he still there?

ANNE. I lost sight of him in the crowd. I think he has gone. If only he does not come back!

LOUIS [*with grim conviction*]. He will.

ANNE. I am trying to hope not.

ELOISE. I have told you from the first that you overestimate his importance. Haven't I said it often enough?

ANNE [*under her breath*]. You have!

ELOISE [*coldly*]. He will not harm you.

ANNE [*looking out of the window*]. More people down there; they are running to the wine shop.

LOUIS. Gentle idlers! [*The sound of triumphant shouting comes up from the street below.*] That means that the list of the guillotined has arrived from Paris.

ANNE [*shivering.*] They are posting it in the wine-shop window. [*The shouting increases suddenly to a roar of hilarity, in which the shrilling of women mingles.*]

LOUIS. Ah! One remarks that the list is a long one. The good people are well satisfied with it. [TO ELOISE] My cousin, in this amiable populace which you champion, do you never scent

something of—well, something of the graveyard scavenger? [*She offers the response of an unmoved glance in his direction, and slowly goes out by the door at which she entered.* LOUIS *sighs again and returns to his scribbling.*]

ANNE [*nervously*]. Haven't you finished, Louis?

LOUIS [*indicating the floor strewn with crumpled slips of paper*]. A dozen.

ANNE. Not good enough?

LOUIS [*with a rueful smile*]. I have lived to discover that among all the disadvantages of being a Peer of France the most dangerous is that one is so poor a forger. Truly, however, our parents are not to be blamed for neglecting to have me instructed in this art; evidently they perceived I had no talent for it. [*Lifting a sheet from the desk.*] Oh, vile! I am not even an amateur. [*He leans back, tapping the paper thoughtfully with his pen.*] Do you suppose the Fates took all the trouble to make the Revolution simply to teach me that I have no skill in forgery? Listen. [*He reads what he has written.*] "Committee of Public Safety. In the name of the Republic. To all Officers, Civil and Military: Permit the Citizen Balsage"—that's myself, remember—"and the Citizeness Virginie Balsage, his sister"—that's you, Anne—"and the Citizeness Marie Balsage, his second sister"—that is ELOISE, you undertsand—"to embark in the vessel *Jeune Pierrette* from the port of Boulogne for Barcelona. Signed: Billaud-Varenne. Carnot. Robespierre." Execrable! [*He tears up the paper, scattering the fragments on the*

floor.] I am not even sure it is the proper form. Ah, that Dossonville!

ANNE. But Dossonville helped us——

LOUIS. At a price. Dossonville! An individual of marked attainment, not only in penmanship, but in the art of plausibility. Before I paid him he swore that the passports he forged for us would take us not only out of Paris, but out of the country.

ANNE. Are you sure we must have a separate permit to embark?

LOUIS. The captain of the *Jeune Pierrette* sent one of his sailors to tell me. There is a new Commissioner from the National Committee, he said, and a special order was issued this morning. They have an officer and a file of the National Guard on the quay to see that the order is obeyed.

ANNE. But we bought passports in Paris. Why can't we here?

LOUIS. Send out a street-crier for an accomplished forger? My poor Anne! We can only hope that the lieutenant on the quay may be drunk when he examines my dreadful "permit." Pray a great thirst upon him, my sister! [*He looks at a watch which he draws from beneath his frock.*] Four o'clock. At five the tide in the river is poised at its highest; then it must run out, and the *Jeune Pierrette* with it. We have an hour. I return to my crime. [*He takes a fresh sheet of paper and begins to write.*]

ANNE [*urgently*]. Hurry, Louis!

LOUIS. Watch for Master Spy.

ANNE. I cannot see him. [*There is silence for a time, broken only by the nervous scratching of* LOUIS'S *pen.*]

LOUIS [*at work*]. Still you don't see him?

ANNE. No. The people are dispersing. They seem in a good humor.

LOUIS. Ah, if they knew—— [*He breaks off, examines his latest effort, attentively, and finds it unsatisfactory, as is evinced by the noiseless whistle of disgust to which his lips form themselves. He discards the sheet and begins another, speaking rather absently as he does so.*] I suppose I have the distinction to be one of the most hated men in our country, now that all the decent people have left it—so many by a road something of the shortest! Yes, these merry gentlemen below there would be still merrier if they knew they had within their reach a forfeited "Emigrant." I wonder how long it would take them to climb the break-neck flights to our door. Lord, there'd be a race for it! Prize-money, too, I fancy, for the first with his bludgeon.

ANNE [*lamentably*]. Louis, Louis! Why didn't you lie safe in England?

LOUIS [*smiling*]. Anne, Anne! I had to come back for a good sister of mine.

ANNE. But I could have escaped alone.

LOUIS. That is it—"alone"! [*He lowers his voice as he glances toward the open door.*] For she would not have moved at all if I hadn't come to bully her into it. A fanatic, a fanatic!

ANNE [*brusquely*]. She is a fool. Therefore be patient with her.

LOUIS [*warningly*]. Hush.

ELOISE [*in a loud, careless tone from the other room*]. Oh, I heard you! What does it matter? [*She returns, carrying a handsome skirt and bodice of brocade and a woman's long mantle of light-green cloth, hooded and lined with fur. She drops them into the portmanteau and closes it.*] There! I've finished your packing for you.

LOUIS [*rising*]. My cousin, I regret that we could not provide servants for this flight. [*Bowing formally.*] I regret that we have been compelled to ask you to do a share of what is necessary.

ELOISE [*turning to go out again*]. That all?

LOUIS [*lifting the portmanteau*]. I fear——

ELOISE [*with assumed fatigue*]. Yes, you usually do. What now?

LOUIS [*flushing painfully*]. The portmanteau is too heavy. [*He returns to the desk, sits and busies himself with his writing, keeping his grieved face from her view.*]

ELOISE. You mean you're too weak to carry it?

LOUIS. Suppose at the last moment it becomes necessary to hasten exceedingly——

ELOISE. You mean, suppose you had to run, you'd throw away the portmanteau. [*Contemptuously.*] Oh, I don't doubt you'd do it!

LOUIS [*forcing himself to look up at her cheerfully*]. I dislike to leave my baggage upon the field, but in case of a rout it might be a temptation—if it were an impediment.

ANNE [*peremptorily*]. Don't waste time. Lighten the portmanteau.

LOUIS. You may take out everything of mine.

ELOISE. There's nothing of yours in it except your cloak. You don't suppose——

ANNE. Take out that heavy brocade of mine.

ELOISE. Thank you for not wishing to take out my fur-lined cloak and freezing me at sea!

LOUIS [*gently*]. Take out both the cloak and the dress.

ELOISE [*astounded*]. What!

LOUIS. You shall have mine. It is as warm, but not so heavy.

ELOISE [*angrily*]. Oh, I am sick of your eternal packing and unpacking! I am sick of it!

ANNE. Watch at the window, then. [*She goes swiftly to the portmanteau, opens it, tosses out the green mantle and the brocaded skirt and bodice, and tests the weight of the portmanteau.*] I think it will be light enough now, Louis.

LOUIS. Do not leave those things in sight. If our landlord should come in——

ANNE. I'll hide them in the bed in the next room. Eloise! [*She points imperiously to the window.* ELOISE *goes to it slowly and for a moment makes a scornful pretense of being on watch there; but as soon as* MADAME DE LASEYNE *has left the room she turns leaning against the wall and regarding* LOUIS *with languid amusement. He continues to struggle with his ill-omened "permit," but, by and by, becoming aware of her gaze, glances consciously over his shoulder and meets her half-veiled eyes. Colouring, he looks away, stares dreamily at nothing, sighs, and finally writes again, absently, like a man*

under a spell, which indeed, he is. The pen drops from his hand with a faint click upon the floor. He makes the movement of a person suddenly awakened, and, holding his last writing near one of the candles examines it critically. Then he breaks into low, bitter laughter.]

ELOISE [*unwillingly curious*]. You find something amusing?

LOUIS. Myself. One of my mistakes, that is all.

ELOISE [*indifferently*]. Your mirth must be indefatigable if you can still laugh at those.

LOUIS. I agree. I am a history of error.

ELOISE. You should have made it a vocation; it is your one genius. And yet—truly because I am a fool I think, as Anne says—I let you hector me into a sillier mistake than any of yours.

LOUIS. When?

ELOISE [*flinging out her arms*]. Oh, when I consented to this absurd journey, this *tiresome* journey—with *you!* An "escape"? From nothing. In "disguise." Which doesn't disguise.

LOUIS [*his voice taut with the effort for self-command*]. My sister asked me to be patient with you, Eloise——

ELOISE. Because I am a fool, yes. Thanks. [*Shrewishly.*] And then, my worthy young man? [*He rises abruptly, smarting almost beyond endurance.*]

LOUIS [*breathing deeply*]. Have I not been patient with you?

ELOISE [*with a flash of energy*]. If I have asked

you to be anything whatever—with me!—pray recall the petition to my memory.

LOUIS [*beginning to let himself go*]. Patient! Have I ever been anything but patient with you? Was I not patient with you five years ago when you first harangued us on your "Rights of Man" and your monstrous republicanism? Where you got hold of it all I don't know——

ELOISE [*kindling*]. Ideas, my friend. Naturally, incomprehensible to you. Books! Brains! Men!

LOUIS. "Books! Brains! Men!" Treason, poison, and mobs! Oh, I could laugh at you then: they were only beginning to kill us, and I was patient. Was I not patient with you when these Republicans of yours drove us from our homes, from our country, stole all we had, assassinated us in dozens, in hundreds, murdered our King? [*He walks the floor, gesticulating nervously.*] When I saw relative after relative of my own—aye, and of yours, too—dragged to the abattoir—even poor, harmless, kind André de Laseyne, whom they took simply because he was my brother-in-law—was I not patient? And when I came back to Paris for you and Anne, and had to lie hid in a stable, every hour in greater danger because you would not be persuaded to join us, was I not patient? And when you finally did consent, but protested every step of the way, pouting and——

ELIOSE [*stung*]. "Pouting!"

LOUIS. And when that stranger came posting after us, so obvious a spy——

ELOISE [*scornfully*]. Pooh! He is nothing.

LOUIS. Is there a league between here and Paris over which he has not dogged us? By diligence, on horseback, on foot, turning up at every posting-house, every roadside inn, the while you laughed at me because I read death in his face! These two days we have been here, is there an hour when you could look from that window except to see him grinning up from the wine-shop door down there?

ELOISE [*impatiently, but with a somewhat conscious expression*]. I tell you not to fear him. There is nothing in it.

LOUIS [*looking at her keenly*]. Be sure I understand why you do not think him a spy! You believe he has followed us because you——

ELOISE. I expected that! Oh, I knew it would come! [*Furiously*]. I never saw the man before in my life!

LOUIS [*pacing the floor*]. He is unmistakable; his trade is stamped on him; a hired trailer of your precious "Nation's."

ELOISE [*haughtily*]. The Nation is the People. You malign because you fear. The People is sacred!

LOUIS [*with increasing bitterness*]. Aren't you tired yet of the Palais Royal platitudes? I have been patient with your Mericourtisms for so long. Yes, always I was patient. Always there was time; there was danger, but there was a little time. [*He faces her, his voice becoming louder, his gestures more vehement.*] But now the *Jeune Pierrette* sails this hour, and if we are not out of here and on her

deck when she leaves the quay, my head rolls in Samson's basket within the week, with Anne's and your own to follow! *Now*, I tell you, there is no more time, and *now*——

ELOISE [*suavely*]. Yes? Well? "Now?" [*He checks himself; his lifted hand falls to his side.*]

LOUIS [*in a gentle voice*]. I am still patient. [*He looks into her eyes, makes her a low and formal obeisance, and drops dejectedly into the chair at the desk.*]

ELOISE [*dangerously*]. Is the oration concluded?

LOUIS. Quite.

ELOISE [*suddenly volcanic*]. Then "*now*" you'll perhaps be "patient" enough to explain why I shouldn't leave you instantly. Understand fully that I have come thus far with you and Anne solely to protect you in case you were suspected. "*Now*," my little man, you are safe: you have only to go on board your vessel. Why should I go with you? Why do you insist on dragging me out of the country?

LOUIS [*wearily*]. Only to save your life; that is all.

ELOISE. My life! Tut! My life is safe with the People—my People! [*She draws herself up magnificently.*] The Nation would protect me! I gave the people my whole fortune when they were starving. After that, who in France dare lay a finger upon the Citizeness Eloise d'Anville!

LOUIS. I have the idea sometimes, my cousin, that perhaps if you had not given them your property they would have taken it anyway. [*Dryly.*] They did mine.

ELOISE [*agitated*]. I do not expect you to comprehend what I felt—what I feel! [*She lifts her arms longingly.*] Oh, for a Man!—a Man who could understand me!

LOUIS [*sadly*]. That excludes me!

ELOISE. Shall I spell it?

LOUIS. You are right. So far from understanding you, I understand nothing. The age is too modern for me. I do not understand why this rabble is permitted to rule France; I do not even understand why it is permitted to live.

ELOISE [*with superiority*]. Because you belong to the class that thought itself made of porcelain and the rest of the world clay. It is simple: the mud-ball breaks the vase.

LOUIS. You belong to the same class, even to the same family.

ELOISE. You are wrong. One circumstance proves me no aristocrat.

LOUIS. What circumstance?

ELOISE. That I happened to be born with brains. I can account for it only by supposing some hushed-up ancestral scandal. [*Brusquely.*] Do you understand that?

LOUIS. I overlook it. [*He writes again.*]

ELOISE. Quibbling was always a habit of yours. [*Snapping at him irritably.*] Oh, stop that writing! You can't do it, and you don't need it. You blame the people because they turn on you now, after you've whipped and beaten and ground them underfoot for centuries and centuries and——

LOUIS. Quite a career for a man of twenty-nine!

ELOISE. I have said that quibbling was——

LOUIS [*despondently*]. Perhaps it is. To return to my other deficiencies, I do not understand why this spy who followed us from Paris has not arrested me long before now. I do not understand why you hate me. I do not understand the world in general. And in particular I do not understand the art of forgery. [*He throws down his pen.*]

ELOISE. You talk of "patience"! How often have I explained that you would not need passports of any kind if you would let me throw off my incognito. If anyone questions you, it will be sufficient if I give my name. All France knows the Citizeness Eloise d'Anville. Do you suppose the officer on the quay would dare oppose——

LOUIS [*with a gesture of resignation*]. I know you think it.

ELOISE [*angrily*]. You tempt me not to prove it. But for Anne's sake——

LOUIS. Not for mine. That, at least, I understand. [*He rises.*] My dear cousin, I am going to be very serious——

ELOISE. O heavens! [*She flings away from him.*]

LOUIS [*plaintively*]. I shall not make another oration——

ELOISE. Make anything you choose. [*Drumming the floor with her foot.*] What does it matter?

LOUIS. I have a presentiment—I ask you to listen——

ELOISE [*in her irritation almost screaming.*] How can I *help* but listen? And Anne, too! [*With a short laugh.*] You know as well as I do

that when that door is open everything you say in this room is heard in there. [*She points to the open doorway, where* MADAME DE LASEYNE *instantly makes her appearance, and after exchanging one fiery glance with* ELOISE *as swiftly withdraws, closing the door behind her with outraged emphasis.*

ELOISE [*breaking into a laugh*]. Forward, soldiers!

LOUIS [*reprovingly*]. Eloise!

ELOISE. Well, *open* the door, then, if you want her to hear you make love to me! [*Coolly.*] That's what you're going to do, isn't it?

LOUIS [*with imperfect self-control*]. I wish to ask you for the last time——

ELOISE [*flouting*]. There are so many last times!

LOUIS. To ask you if you are sure that you know your own heart. You cared for me once, and——

ELOISE [*as if this were news indeed*]. I did? Who under heaven ever told you that?

LOUIS [*flushing*]. You allowed yourself to be betrothed to me, I believe.

ELOISE. "Allowed" is the word, precisely. I seem to recall changing all that the very day I became an orphan—and my own master! [*Satirically polite.*] Pray correct me if my memory errs. How long ago was it? Six years? Seven?

LOUIS [*with emotion*]. Eloise, Eloise, you did love me then! We were happy, both of us, so very happy——

ELOISE [*sourly*]. "Both"! My faith! But I must have been a brave little actress.

LOUIS. I do not believe it. You loved me. I—— [*He hesitates.*]

ELOISE. Do get on with what you have to say.

LOUIS [*in a low voice*]. I have many forebodings, Eloise, but the strongest—and for me the saddest—is that this is the last chance you will ever have to tell—to tell me—— [*He falters again.*]

ELOISE [*irritated beyond measure, shouting*]. To tell you *what?*

LOUIS [*swallowing*]. That your love for me still lingers.

ELOISE [*promptly*]. Well, it doesn't. So *that's* over!

LOUIS. Not quite yet. I——

ELOISE [*dropping into a chair*]. O Death!

LOUIS [*still gently*]. Listen. I have hope that you and Anne may be permitted to escape; but as for me, since the first moment I felt the eyes of that spy from Paris upon me I have had the premonition that I would be taken back—to the guillotine, Eloise. I am sure that he will arrest me when I attempt to leave this place to-night. [*With sorrowful earnestness.*] And it is with the certainty in my soul that this is our last hour together that I ask you if you cannot tell me that the old love has come back. Is there nothing in your heart for me?

ELOISE. Was there anything in *your* heart for the beggar who stood at your door in the old days?

LOUIS. Is there nothing for him who stands at yours now, begging for a word?

ELOISE [*frowning*]. I remember you had the name of a disciplinarian in your regiment. [*She*

rises to face him.] Did you ever find anything in your heart for the soldiers you ordered tied up and flogged? Was there anything in your heart for the peasants who starved in your fields?

LOUIS [*quietly*]. No; it was too full of you.

ELOISE. Words! Pretty little words!

LOUIS. Thoughts. Pretty, because they are of you. All, always of you—always, my dear. I never really think of anything but you. The picture of you is always before the eyes of my soul; the very name of you is forever in my heart. [*With a rueful smile.*] And it is on the tips of my fingers, sometimes when it shouldn't be. See. [*He steps to the desk and shows her a scribbled sheet.*] This is what I laughed at a while ago. I tried to write, with you near me, and unconsciously I let your name creep into my very forgery! I wrote it as I wrote it in the sand when we were children; as I have traced it a thousand times on coated mirrors —on frosted windows. [*He reads the writing aloud.*] "Permit the Citizen Balsage and his sister, the Citizeness Virginie Balsage, and his second sister, the Citizeness Marie Balsage, and Eloise d'Anville"—so I wrote!—"to embark upon the vessel *Jeune Pierrette*——" You see? [*He lets the paper fall upon the desk.*] Even in this danger, that I feel closer and closer with every passing second, your name came in of itself. I am like that English Mary: if they will open my heart when I am dead, they shall find, not "Calais," but "Eloise"!

ELOISE [*going to the dressing-table*]. Louis, that doesn't interest me. [*She adds a delicate touch or*

two to her hair, studying it thoughtfully in the dressing-table mirror.]

LOUIS [*sombrely*]. I told you long ago——

ELOISE [*smiling at her reflection*]. So you did—often!

LOUIS [*breathing quickly*]. I have nothing new to offer. I understand. I bore you.

ELOISE. Louis, to be frank: I don't care what they find in your heart when they open it.

LOUIS [*with a hint of sternness*]. Have you never reflected that there might be something for me to forgive you?

ELOISE [*glancing at him over her shoulder in frowning surprise*]. What!

LOUIS. I wonder sometimes if you have ever found a flaw in your own character.

ELOISE [*astounded*]. So! [*Turning sharply upon him.*] You are assuming the right to criticize me, are you? Oho!

LOUIS [*agitated*]. I state merely—I have said—I think I forgive you a great deal——

ELOISE [*beginning to char*]. You do! You bestow your gracious pardon upon me, do you? [*Bursting into flame.*] Keep your forgiveness to yourself! When I want it I'll kneel at your feet and beg it of you! You can *kiss* me then, for then you will know that "the old love has come back"!

LOUIS [*miserably*]. When you kneel——

ELOISE. Can you picture it—*Marquis?* [*She hurls his title at him, and draws herself up in icy splendor.*] I am a woman of the Republic!

LOUIS. And the Republic has no need of love.

ELOISE. Its daughter has no need of yours!

LOUIS. Until you kneel to me. You have spoken. It is ended. [*Turning from her with a pathetic gesture of farewell and resignation, his attention is suddenly arrested by something invisible. He stands for a moment transfixed. When he speaks, it is in an altered tone, light and at the same time ominous.*] My cousin, suffer the final petition of a bore. Forgive my seriousness; forgive my stupidity, for I believe that what one hears now means that a number of things are indeed ended. Myself among them.

ELOISE [*not comprehending*]. "What one hears"?

LOUIS [*slowly*]. In the distance. [*Both stand motionless to listen, and the room is silent. Gradually a muffled, multitudinous sound, at first very faint, becomes audible.*]

ELOISE. What is it?

LOUIS [*with pale composure*]. Only a song! [*The distant sound becomes distinguishable as a singing from many unmusical throats and pitched in every key, a drum-beat booming underneath; a tumultuous rumble which grows slowly louder. The door of the inner room opens, and* MADAME DE LASEYNE *enters.*]

ANNE [*briskly, as she comes in*]. I have hidden the cloak and the dress beneath the mattress. Have you——

LOUIS [*lifting his hand*]. Listen! [*She halts, startled. The singing, the drums, and the tumult swell suddenly much louder, as if the noise-makers had turned a corner.*]

ANNE [*crying out*]. The "Marseillaise"!

LOUIS. The "Vultures' Chorus"!

ELOISE [*in a ringing voice*]. The Hymn of Liberty!

ANNE [*trembling violently*]. It grows louder.

LOUIS. *Nearer!*

ELOISE [*running to the window*]. They are coming this way!

ANNE [*rushing ahead of her*]. They have turned the corner of the street. Keep back, Louis!

ELOISE [*leaning out of the window, enthusiastically*]. *Vive la*—— [*She finishes with an indignant gurgle as* ANNE DE LASEYNE, *without comment, claps a prompt hand over her mouth and pushes her vigorously from the window.*]

ANNE. A mob—carrying torches and dancing. [*Her voice shaking wildly.*] They are following a troop of soldiers.

LOUIS. The National Guard.

ANNE. Keep back from the window! A man in a tricolour scarf marching in front.

LOUIS. A political, then—an official of their government.

ANNE. O Virgin, have mercy! [*She turns a stricken face upon her brother.*] It is that——

LOUIS [*biting his nails*]. Of course. Our spy. [*He takes a hesitating step toward the desk; but swings about, goes to the door at the rear, shoots the bolt back and forth, apparently unable to decide upon a course of action; finally leaves the door bolted and examines the hinges.* ANNE, *meanwhile, has hurried to the desk, and, seizing a candle there, begins to light others in a*

candelabrum on the dressing-table. The noise outside grows to an uproar; the "Marseillaise" changes to "Ça ira"; and a shaft of the glare from the torches below shoots through the window and becomes a staggering red patch on the ceiling.]

ANNE [*feverishly*]. Lights! Light those candles in the sconce, Eloise! Light all the candles we have. [ELOISE, *resentful, does not move.*]

LOUIS. No, no! Put them out!

ANNE. Oh, fatal! [*She stops him as he rushes to obey his own command.*] If our window is lighted he will believe we have no thought of leaving, and pass by. [*She hastily lights the candles in a sconce upon the wall as she speaks; the shabby place is now brightly illuminated.*]

LOUIS. He will not pass by. [*The external tumult culminates in riotous yelling, as, with a final roll, the drums cease to beat.* MADAME DE LASEYNE *runs again to the window.*]

ELOISE [*sullenly*]. You are disturbing yourselves without reason. They will not stop here.

ANNE [*in a sickly whisper*]. They *have* stopped.

LOUIS. At the door of this house? [MADAME DE LASEYNE, *leaning against the wall, is unable to reply, save by a gesture. The noise from the street dwindles to a confused, expectant murmur.* LOUIS *takes a pistol from beneath his blouse, strides to the door, and listens.*]

ANNE [*faintly*]. He is in the house. The soldiers followed him.

LOUIS. They are on the lower stairs. [*He turns to the two women humbly.*] My sister and my cousin,

my poor plans have only made everything worse for you. I cannot ask you to forgive me. We are caught.

ANNE [*vitalized with the energy of desperation*]. Not till the very last shred of hope is gone. [*She springs to the desk and begins to tear the discarded sheets into minute fragments.*] Is that door fastened?

LOUIS. They'll break it down, of course.

ANNE. Where is our passport from Paris?

LOUIS. Here. [*He gives it to her.*]

ANNE. Quick! Which of these "permits" is the best?

LOUIS. They're all hopeless—— [*He fumbles among the sheets on the desk.*]

ANNE. Any of them. We can't stop to select. [*She thrusts the passport and a haphazard sheet from the desk into the bosom of her dress. An orderly tramping of heavy shoes and a clinking of metal become audible as the soldiers ascend the upper flight of stairs.*]

ELOISE. All this is childish. [*Haughtily.*] I shall merely announce——

ANNE [*uttering a half-choked scream of rage*]. You'll announce nothing! Out of here, both of you!

LOUIS. No, no!

ANNE [*with breathless rapidity, as the noise on the stairs grows louder*]. Let them break the door in if they will; only let them find me alone. [*She seizes her brother's arm imploringly as he pauses, uncertain.*] Give me the chance to make them think I am here alone.

LOUIS. I can't——

ANNE [*urging him to the inner door*]. Is there any other possible hope for us? Is there any other possible way to gain even a little time? Louis, I want your word of honor not to leave that room unless I summon you. I must have it! [*Overborne by her intensity,* LOUIS *nods despairingly, allowing her to force him toward the other room. The tramping of the soldiers, much louder and very close, comes to a sudden stop. There is a sharp word of command, and a dozen muskets ring on the floor just beyond the outer door.*]

ELOISE [*folding her arms*]. You needn't think I shall consent to hide myself. I shall tell them——

ANNE [*in a surcharged whisper*]. You will *not* ruin us! [*With furious determination, as a loud knock falls upon the door.*] In *there,* I tell you! [*Almost physically she sweeps both* ELOISE *and* LOUIS *out of the room, closes the door upon them, and leans against it, panting. The knocking is repeated. She braces herself to speak.*]

ANNE [*with a catch in her throat*]. Who is—there?

A SONOROUS VOICE. French Republic!

ANNE [*faltering*]. It is—it is difficult to hear. What do you——

THE VOICE. Open the door.

ANNE [*more firmly*]. That is impossible.

THE VOICE. Open the door.

ANNE. What is your name?

THE VOICE. Valsin, National Agent.

ANNE. I do not know you.

THE VOICE. Open!

ANNE. I am here alone. I am dressing. I can admit no one.

THE VOICE. For the last time: open!

ANNE. No!

THE VOICE. Break it down. [*A thunder of blows from the butts of muskets falls upon the door.*]

ANNE [*rushing toward it in a passion of protest*]. No, no, no! You shall not come in! I tell you I have not finished dressing. If you are men of honour—— *Ah!* [*She recoils, gasping as a panel breaks in, the stock of a musket following it; and then, weakened at rusty bolt and crazy hinge, the whole door gives way and falls crashing into the room. The narrow passage thus revealed is crowded with shabbily uniformed soldiers of the National Guard, under an officer armed with a sabre. As the door falls a man wearing a tricolour scarf strides by them, and, standing beneath the dismantled lintel, his hands behind him, sweeps the room with a smiling eye.*

This personage is handsomely, almost dandiacally dressed in black; his ruffle is of lace, his stockings are of silk; the lapels of his waistcoat, overlapping those of his long coat, exhibit a rich embroidery of white and crimson. These and other details of elegance, such as his wearing powder upon his dark hair, indicate either insane daring or an importance quite overwhelming. A certain easy power in his unusually brilliant eyes favours the probability that, like Robespierre, he can wear what he pleases. Undeniably he has distinction. Equally undeniable is something is his air that is dapper and impish and lurking. His first glance over the room apparently affording

him acute satisfaction, he steps lightly across the prostrate door, MADAME DE LASEYNE *retreating before him but keeping herself between him and the inner door. He comes to an unexpected halt in a dancing-master's posture, removing his huge hat—which displays a tricolour plume of ostrich feathers—with a wide flourish, an intentional burlesque of the old-court manner.*

VALSIN. Permit me. [*He bows elaborately.*] Be gracious to a recent fellow-traveler. I introduce myself. At your service: Valsin, Agent of the National Committee of Public Safety. [*He faces about sharply.*] Soldiers! [*They stand at attention.*] To the street door. I will conduct the examination alone. My assistant will wait on this floor, at the top of the stair. Send the people away down below there, officer. Look to the courtyard. Clear the streets. [*The officer salutes, gives a word of command and the soldiers shoulder their muskets, march off, and are heard clanking down the stairs.* VALSIN *tosses his hat upon the desk, and turns smilingly to the trembling but determined* MADAME DE LASEYNE.]

ANNE [*summoning her indignation*]. How dare you break down my door! How dare you force your——

VALSIN [*suavely*]. My compliments on the celerity with which the citizeness has completed her toilet. Marvelous. An example to her sex.

ANNE. You intend robbery, I suppose.

VALSIN [*with a curt laugh*]. Not precisely.

ANNE. What, then?

VALSIN. I have come principally for the returned Emigrant, Louis Valny-Cherault, formerly called Marquis de Valny-Cherault, formerly of the former regiment of Valny; also formerly——

ANNE [*cutting him off sharply*]. I do not know what you mean by all these names—and "formerlies"!

VALSIN. No? [*Persuasively.*] Citizeness, pray assert that I did not encounter you last week on your journey from Paris——

ANNE [*hastily*]. It is true I have been to Paris on business; you may have seen me—I do not know. Is it a crime to return from Paris?

VALSIN [*in a tone of mock encouragement*]. It will amuse me to hear you declare that I did not see you traveling in company with Louis Valny-Cherault. Come! Say it.

ANNE [*stepping back defensively, closer to the inner door*]. I am alone, I tell you! I do not know what you mean. If you saw me speaking with people in the diligence, or at some posting-house, they were only traveling acquaintances. I did not know them. I am a widow——

VALSIN. My condolences. Poor, of course?

ANNE. Yes.

VALSIN. And lonely, of course? [*Apologetically.*] Loneliness is in the formula: I suggest it for fear you might forget.

ANNE [*doggedly*]. I am alone.

VALSIN. Quite right.

ANNE [*confusedly*]. I am a widow, I tell you—a widow, living here quietly with——

VALSIN [*taking her up quickly*]. Ah—"*with*"! Living here alone, and also "with"—whom? Not your late husband?

ANNE [*desperately*]. With my niece.

VALSIN [*affecting great surprise*]. Ah! A niece! And the niece, I take it, is in your other room yonder?

VALSIN [*taking a step forward*]. Is she pretty? [ANNE *places her back against the closed door, facing him grimly. He assumes a tone of indulgence.*] Ah, one must not look: the niece, likewise, has not completed her toilet.

ANNE. She is—asleep.

VALSIN [*glancing toward the dismantled doorway*]. A sound napper! Why did you not say instead that she was—shaving? [*He advances, smiling.*]

ANNE [*between her teeth*]. You shall not go in! You cannot see her! She is——

VALSIN [*laughing*]. Allow me to prompt you. She is not only asleep; she is ill. She is starving. Also, I cannot go in because she is an orphan. Surely, she is an orphan? A lonely widow and her lonely orphan niece. Ah, touching—and sweet!

ANNE [*hotly*]. What authority have you to force your way into my apartment and insult——

VALSIN [*touching his scarf*]. I had the honour to mention the French Republic.

ANNE. So! Does the French Republic persecute widows and orphans?

VALSIN [*gravely*]. No. It is the making of them!

ANNE [*crying out*]. Ah, horrible!

VALSIN. I regret that its just severity was the cause of your own bereavement, Citizeness. When your unfortunate husband, André, formerly known as the Prince de Laseyne——

ANNE [*defiantly, though tears have sprung to her eyes*]. I tell you I do not know what you mean by these titles. My name is Balsage.

VALSIN. Bravo! The Widow Balsage, living here in calm obscurity with her niece. Widow Balsage, answer quickly, without stopping to think. [*Sharply.*] How long have you lived here?

ANNE. Two months. [*Faltering.*]—A year!

VALSIN [*laughing*]. Good. Two months and a year! No visitors? No strangers?

ANNE. No.

VALSIN [*wheeling quickly and picking up* LOUIS'S *cap from the dressing-table*]. This cap, then, belongs to your niece.

ANNE [*flustered, advancing toward him as if to take it*]. It was—it was left here this afternoon by our landlord.

VALSIN [*musingly*]. That is very, very puzzling. [*He leans against the dressing-table in a careless attitude, his back to her.*]

ANNE [*cavalierly*]. Why "puzzling"?

VALSIN. Because I sent him on an errand to Paris this morning. [*She flinches, but he does not turn to look at her, continuing in a tone of idle curiosity.*] I suppose your own excursion to Paris was quite an event for you, Widow Balsage. You do not take many journeys?

ANNE. I am too poor.

VALSIN. And you have not been contemplating another departure from Boulogne?

ANNE. No.

VALSIN [*still in the same careless attitude, his back toward her and the closed door*]. Good. It is as I thought: the portmanteau is for ornament.

ANNE [*choking*]. It belongs to my niece. She came only an hour ago. She has not unpacked.

VALSIN. Naturally. Too ill.

ANNE. She had traveled all night; she was exhausted. She went to sleep at once.

VALSIN. Is she a somnambulist?

ANNE [*taken aback*]. Why?

VALSIN [*indifferently*]. She has just opened the door of her room in order to overhear our conversation. [*Waving his hand to the dressing-table mirror, in which he had been gazing.*] Observe it, Citizeness Laseyne.

ANNE [*demoralized*]. I do not—I—— [*Stamping her foot.*] How often shall I tell you my name is Balsage!

VALSIN [*turning to her apologetically*]. My wretched memory. Perhaps I might remember better if I saw it written: I beg a glance at your papers. Doubtless you have your certificate of citizenship——

ANNE [*trembling*]. I have papers, certainly.

VALSIN. The sight of them——

ANNE. I have my passport; you shall see. [*With wildly shaking hands she takes from her blouse the passport and the "permit," crumpled together.*] It is in proper form—— [*She is nervously replacing*

the two papers in her bosom when with a sudden movement he takes them from her. She cries out incoherently, and attempts to recapture them.]

VALSIN [*extending his left arm to fend her off*]. Yes, here you have your passport. And there you have others. [*He points to the littered floor under the desk.*] Many of them!

ANNE. Old letters! [*She clutches at the papers in his grasp.*]

VALSIN [*easily fending her off*]. Doubtless! [*He shakes the "permit" open.*] Oho! A permission to embark—and signed by three names of the highest celebrity. Alas, these unfortunate statesmen, Billaud-Varenne, Carnot, and Robespierre! Each has lately suffered an injury to his right hand. What a misfortune for France! And what a coincidence! One has not heard the like since we closed the theatres.

ANNE [*furiously struggling to reach his hand*]. Give me my papers! Give me——

VALSIN [*holding them away from her*]. You see, these unlucky great men had their names signed for them by somebody else. And I should judge that this somebody else must have been writing quite recently—less than half an hour ago, from the freshness of the ink—and in considerable haste; perhaps suffering considerable anguish of mind, Widow Balsage! [MADAME DE LASEYNE, *overwhelmed, sinks into a chair. He comes close to her, his manner changing startlingly.*]

VALSIN [*bending over with sudden menace, his voice loud and harsh*]. Widow Balsage, if you in-

tend no journey, why have you this forged permission to embark on the *Jeune Pierrette?* Widow Balsage, *who* is the Citizen Balsage?

ANNE [*faintly*]. My brother.

VALSIN [*straightening up*]. Your first truth. [*Resuming his gaiety.*] Of course he is not in that room yonder with your niece.

ANNE [*brokenly*]. No, no, no; he is not! He is not here.

VALSIN [*commiseratingly*]. Poor woman! You have not even the pleasure to perceive how droll you are.

ANNE. I perceive that I am a fool! [*She dashes the tears from her eyes and springs to her feet.*] I also perceive that you have denounced us before the authorities here——

VALSIN. Pardon. In Boulogne it happens that I am the authority. I introduce myself for the third time: Valsin, Commissioner of the National Committee of Public Safety. Tallien was sent to Bordeaux; Collot to Lyons; I to Boulogne. Citizeness, were all of the august names on your permit genuine, you could no more leave this port without my counter-signature than you could take wing and fly over the Channel!

ANNE [*with a shrill laugh of triumph*]. You have overreached yourself! You're an ordinary spy: you followed us from Paris——

VALSIN [*gaily*]. Oh, I intended you to notice that!

ANNE [*unheeding*]. You have claimed to be Commissioner of the highest power in France.

We can prove that you are a common spy. You may go to the guillotine for that. Take care, Citizen! So! You have denounced us; we denounce you. I'll have you arrested by your own soldiers. I'll call them—— [*She makes a feint of running to the window. He watches her coolly, in silence; and she halts, chagrined.*]

VALSIN [*pleasantly*]. I was sure you would not force me to be premature. Remark it, Citizeness Laseyne: I am enjoying all this. I have waited a long time for it.

ANNE [*becoming hysterical*]. I am the Widow Balsage, I tell you! You do not know us—you followed us from Paris. [*Half-sobbing.*] You're a spy—a hanger-on of the police. We will prove——

VALSIN [*stepping to the dismantled doorway*]. I left my assistant within hearing—a species of animal of mine. I may claim that he belongs to me. A worthy patriot, but skillful, who has had the honour of a slight acquaintance with you, I believe. [*Calling.*] Dossonville! [*Dossonville, a large man, flabby of flesh, loose-mouthed, grizzled, carelessly dressed, makes his appearance in the doorway. He has a harsh and reckless eye; and, obviously a flamboyant bully by temperament, his abject, doggish deference to* VALSIN *is instantly impressive, more than confirming the latter's remark that* DOSSONVILLE *"belongs" to him.* DOSSONVILLE, *apparently, is a chattel indeed, body and soul. At sight of him* MADAME DE LASEYNE *catches at the desk for support and stands speechless.*]

VALSIN [*easily*]. DOSSONVILLE, you may inform the Citzeness Laseyne what office I have the fortune to hold.

DOSSONVILLE [*coming in*]. Bright heaven! All the world knows that you are the representative of the Committee of Public Safety. Commissioner to Boulogne.

VALSIN. With what authority?

DOSSONVILLE. Absolute—unlimited! Naturally. What else would be useful?

VALSIN. You recall this woman, Dossonville?

DOSSONVILLE. She was present when I delivered the passport to the Emigrant Valny-Cherault, in Paris.

VALSIN. Did you forge that passport?

DOSSONVILLE. No. I told the Emigrant I had. Under orders. [*Grinning.*] It was genuine.

VALSIN. Where did you get it?

DOSSONVILLE. From you.

VALSIN [*suavely*]. Sit down, Dossonville. [*The latter, who is standing by a chair, obeys with a promptness more than military.* VALSIN *turns smilingly to* MADAME DE LASEYNE.] Dossonville's instructions, however, did not include a "permit" to sail on the *Jeune Pierrette*. All of which, I confess, Citizeness, has very much the appearance of a trap! [*He tosses the two papers upon the desk. Utterly dismayed she makes no effort to secure them. He regards her with quizzical enjoyment.*]

ANNE. Ah—you—— [*She fails to speak coherently.*]

VALSIN. Dossonville has done very well. He

procured your passport, brought your "disguises," planned your journey, even gave you directions how to find these lodgings in Boulogne. Indeed, I instructed him to omit nothing for your comfort. [*He pauses for a moment.*] If I am a spy, Citizeness Laseyne, at least I trust your gracious intelligence may not cling to the epithet "ordinary." My soul! but I appear to myself a most uncommon type of spy—a very intricate, complete, and unusual spy, in fact.

ANNE [*to herself, weeping*]. Ah, poor Louis!

VALSIN [*cheerfully*]. You are beginning to comprehend? That is well. Your niece's door is still ajar by the discreet width of a finger, so I assume that the Emigrant also begins to comprehend. Therefore I take my ease! [*He seats himself in the most comfortable chair in the room, crossing his legs in a leisurely attitude, and lightly drumming the tips of his fingers together, the while his peaceful gaze is fixed upon the ceiling. His tone as he continues, is casual.*] You understand, my Dossonville, having long ago occupied this very apartment myself, I am serenely aware that the Emigrant can leave the other room only by the window; and as this is the fourth floor, and a proper number of bayonets in the courtyard below are arranged to receive any person active enough to descend by a rope of bedclothes, one is confident that the said Emigrant will remain where he is. Let us make ourselves comfortable, for it is a delightful hour—an hour I have long promised myself. I am in a good humour. Let us all be happy. Citizeness

Laseyne, enjoy yourself. Call me some bad names!

ANNE [*between her teeth*]. If I could find one evil enough!

VALSIN [*slapping his knee delightedly*]. There it is: the complete incompetence of your class. You poor aristocrats, you do not even know how to swear. Your ancestors knew how! They were fighters; they knew how to swear because they knew how to attack; you poor moderns have no profanity left in you, because, poisoned by idleness, you have forgotten even how to resist. And yet you thought yourselves on top, and so you were —but as foam is on top of the wave. You forgot that power, like genius, always comes from underneath, because it is produced only by turmoil. We have had to wring the neck of your feather-head court, because while the court was the nation the nation had its pockets picked. You were at the mercy of anybody with a pinch of brains: adventurers like Mazarin, like Fouquet, like Law, or that little commoner, the woman Fish, who called herself Pompadour and took France—France, merely!—from your King, and used it to her own pleasure. Then, at last, after the swindlers had well plucked you—at last, unfortunate creatures, the People got you! Citizeness, the People had starved: be assured they will eat you to the bone—and then eat the bone! You are helpless because you have learned nothing and forgotten everything. You have forgotten everything in this world except how to be fat!

DOSSONVILLE [*applauding with unction*]. Beautiful! It is beautiful, all that! A beautiful speech!

VALSIN. Ass!

DOSSONVILLE [*meekly*]. Perfectly, perfectly.

VALSIN [*crossly*]. That wasn't a speech; it was the truth. Citizeness Laseyne, so far as you are concerned, I am the People. [*He extends his hand negligently, with open palm.*] And I have got you. [*He clenches his fingers, like a cook's on the neck of a fowl.*] Like that! And I'm going to take you back to Paris, you and the Emigrant. [*She stands in an attitude eloquent of despair. His glance roves from her to the door of the other room, which is still slightly ajar; and, smiling at some fugitive thought, he continues, deliberately.*] I take you: you and your brother—and that rather pretty little person who traveled with you. [*There is a breathless exclamation from the other side of the door, which is flung open violently, as* ELOISE—*flushed, radiant with anger, and altogether magnificent—sweeps into the room to confront* VALSIN.]

ELOISE [*slamming the door behind her*]. Leave this Jack-in-Office to me, Anne!

DOSSONVILLE [*dazed by the vision*]. Lord! What glory! [*He rises, bowing profoundly, muttering hoarsely.*] Oh, eyes! Oh, hair! Look at her shape! Her chin! The divine——

VALSIN [*getting up and patting him reassuringly on the back*]. The lady perceives her effect, my Dossonville. It is no novelty. Sit down, my Dossonville. [*The still murmurous* DOSSONVILLE *obeys.*

BOOTH TARKINGTON

VALSIN *turns to* ELOISE, *a brilliant light in his eyes.*] Let me greet one of the nieces of Widow Balsage —evidently not the sleepy one, and certainly not ill. Health so transcendent——

ELOISE [*placing her hand upon* MADAME DE LASEYNE'S *shoulder*]. This is a clown, Anne. You need have no fear of him whatever. His petty authority does not extend to us.

VALSIN [*deferentially*]. Will the niece of Widow Balsage explain why it does not?

ELOISE [*turning upon him fiercely*]. Because the patriot Citizeness Eloise d'Anville is here!

VALSIN [*assuming an air of thoughtfulness*]. Yes, she is here. That "permit" yonder even mentions her by name. It is curious. I shall have to go into that. Continue, niece.

ELOISE [*with supreme haughtiness*]. This lady is under her protection.

VALSIN [*growing red*]. Pardon. Under whose protection?

ELOISE [*sulphurously*]. Under the protection of Eloise d'Anville! [*This has a frightful effect upon* VALSIN; *his face becomes contorted; he clutches at his throat, apparently half strangled, staggers, and falls choking into the easy-chair he has formerly occupied.*]

VALSIN [*gasping, coughing, incoherent*]. Under the pro—the protection—— [*He explodes into peal after peal of uproarious laughter.*] The protection of—— Aha, ha, ha, ho, ho, ho! [*He rocks himself back and forth unappeasably.*]

ELOISE [*with a slight lift of the eyebrows*]. This man is an idiot.

VALSIN [*during an abatement of his attack*]. Oh; pardon! It is—too—much—too much for me! You say—these people are——

ELOISE [*stamping her foot.*] Under the protection of Eloise d'Anville, imbecile! You cannot touch them. She wills it! [*At this,* VALSIN *shouts as if pleading for mercy, and beats the air with his hands. He struggles to his feet and, pounding himself upon the chest, walks to and fro in the effort to control his convulsion.*]

ELOISE [*to* ANNE, *under cover of the noise he makes*]. I was wrong: he is not an idiot.

ANNE [*despairingly*]. He laughs at you.

ELOISE [*in a quick whisper*]. Out of bluster; because he is afraid. He is badly frightened. I know just what to do. Go into the other room with Louis.

ANNE [*protesting weakly*]. I can't hope——

ELOISE [*flashing from a cloud*]. *You* failed, didn't you? [MADAME DE LASEYNE, *after a tearful perusal of the stern resourcefulness now written in the younger woman's eyes, succumbs with a piteous gesture of assent and goes out forlornly.* ELOISE *closes the door and stands with her back to it.*]

VALSIN [*paying no attention to them*]. Eloise d'Anville! [*Still pacing the room in the struggle to subdue his hilarity.*] This young citizeness speaks of the protection of Eloise d'Anville! [*Leaning feebly upon* DOSSONVILLE'S *shoulder.*] Do you hear, my Dossonville? It is an ecstasy. Ecstasize, then. Scream, Dossonville!

DOSSONVILLE [*puzzled but evidently accustomed to*

being so, cackles instantly]. Perfectly. Ha, ha! The citizeness is not only stirringly beautiful, she is also——

VALSIN. She is also a wit. Susceptible henchman, concentrate your thoughts upon domesticity. In this presence remember your wife!

ELOISE [*peremptorily*]. Dismiss that person. I have something to say to you.

VALSIN [*wiping his eyes*]. Dossonville, you are not required. We are going to be sentimental, and heaven knows you are not the moon. In fact, you are a fat old man. Exit, obesity! Go somewhere and think about your children. Flit, whale!

DOSSONVILLE [*rising*]. Perfectly, my chieftain. [*He goes to the broken door.*]

ELOISE [*tapping the floor with her shoe*]. Out of hearing!

VALSIN. The floor below.

DOSSONVILLE. Well understood. Perfectly, perfectly! [*He goes out through the hallway; disappears, chuckling grossly. There are some moments of silence within the room, while he is heard clumping down a flight of stairs; then* VALSIN *turns to* ELOISE *with burlesque ardour.*]

VALSIN. "Alone at last!"

ELOISE [*maintaining her composure*]. Rabbit!

VALSIN [*dropping into the chair at the desk, with mock dejection*]. Repulsed at the outset! Ah, Citizeness, there were moments on the journey from Paris when I thought I detected a certain kindness in your glances at the lonely stranger.

ELOISE [*folding her arms*]. You are to withdraw your soldiers, countersign the "permit," and allow my friends to embark at once.

VALSIN [*with solemnity*]. Do you give it as an order, Citizeness?

ELOISE. I do. You will receive suitable political advancement.

VALSIN [*in a choked voice*]. You mean as a—a reward?

ELOISE [*haughtily*]. *I* guarantee that you shall receive it! [*He looks at her strangely; then, with a low moan, presses his hand to his side, seeming upon the point of a dangerous seizure.*]

VALSIN [*managing to speak*]. I can only beg you to spare me. You have me at your mercy.

ELOISE [*swelling*]. It is well for you that you understand that!

VALSIN [*shaking his hand ruefully*]. Yes; you see I have a bad liver: it may become permanently enlarged. Laughter is my great danger.

ELOISE [*crying out with rage*]. *Oh!*

VALSIN [*dolorously*]. I have continually to remind myself that I am no longer in the first flush of youth.

ELOISE. Idiot! Do you not know who I am!

VALSIN. You? Oh yes—— [*He checks himself abruptly; looks at her with brief intensity; turns his eyes away, half closing them in quick meditation; smiles, as upon some secret pleasantry, and proceeds briskly.*] Oh yes, yes, I know who you are.

ELOISE [*beginning haughtily*]. Then you——

VALSIN [*at once cutting her off*]. As to your name,

I do not say. Names at best are details; and your own is a detail that could hardly be thought to matter. *What* you are is obvious: you joined Louis and his sister in Paris at the barriers, and traveled with them as "Marie Balsage," a sister. You might save us a little trouble by giving us your real name; you will probably refuse, and the police will have to look it up when I take you back to Paris. Frankly you are of no importance to us, though of course we'll send you to the Tribunal. No doubt you are a poor relative of the Valny-Cheraults, or, perhaps, you may have been a governess in the Laseyne family, or——

ELOISE [*under her breath*]. Idiot! Idiot!

VALSIN [*with subterranean enjoyment, watching her sidelong*]. Or the good-looking wife of some faithful retainer of the Emigrant's, perhaps.

ELOISE [*with a shrill laugh*]. Does the Committee of Public Safety betray the same intelligence in the appointment of *all* its agents? [*Violently.*] Imbecile, I——

VALSIN [*quickly raising his voice to check her.*] You are of no importance, I tell you! [*Changing his tone.*] Of course I mean politically. [*With broad gallantry.*] Otherwise, I am the first to admit extreme susceptibility. I saw that you observed it on the way—at the taverns, in the diligence, at the posting-houses, at——

ELOISE [*with serenity*]. Yes. I am accustomed to oglers.

VALSIN. Alas, I believe you! My unfortunate sex is but too responsive.

ELOISE [*gasping*]. "Responsive"—— Oh!

VALSIN [*indulgently*]. Let us return to the safer subject. Presently I shall arrest those people in the other room and, regretfully, you too. But first I pamper myself; I chat; I have an attractive woman to listen. In the matter of the arrest, I delay my fire; I do not flash in the pan, but I lengthen my fuse. Why? For the same reason that when I was a little boy and had something good to eat, I always first paid it the compliments of an epicure. I looked at it a long while. I played with it. Then I devoured it! I am still like that. And Louis yonder is good to eat, because I happen not to love him. However, I should mention that I doubt if he could recall either myself or the circumstance which annoyed me; some episodes are sometimes so little to certain people and so significant to certain other people. [*He smiles, stretching himself luxuriously in his chair.*] Behold me, Citizeness! I am explained. I am indulging my humour: I play with my cake. Let us see into what curious little figures I can twist it.

ELOISE. Idiot!

VALSIN [*pleasantly*]. I have lost count, but I think that is the sixth idiot you have called me. Aha, it is only history, which one admires for repeating itself. Good! Let us march. I shall play—[*He picks up the "permit" from the desk, studies it absently, and looks whimsically at her over his shoulder, continuing:*] I shall play with—with all four of you.

ELOISE [*impulsively*]. Four?

VALSIN. I am not easy to deceive; there are four of you here.

ELOISE [*staring*]. So?

VALSIN. Louis brought you and his sister from Paris: a party of three. This "permit" which he forged is for four; the original three and the woman you mentioned a while ago, Eloise d'Anville. Hence she must have joined you here. The deduction is plain: there are three people in that room: the Emigrant, his sister, and this Eloise d'Anville. To the trained mind such reasoning is simple.

ELOISE [*elated*]. Perfectly!

VALSIN [*with an air of cunning*]. Nothing escapes me. You see that.

ELOISE. At first glance! I make you my most profound compliments. Sir, you are an eagle!

VALSIN [*smugly*]. Thanks. Now, then, pretty governess, you thought this d'Anville might be able to help you. What put that in your head?

ELOISE [*with severity*]. Do you pretend not to know what she is?

VALSIN. A heroine I have had the misfortune never to encounter. But I am informed of her character and history.

ELOISE [*sternly*]. Then you understand that even the Agent of the National Committee risks his head if he dares touch people she chooses to protect.

VALSIN [*extending his hand in plaintive appeal*]. Be generous to my opacity. How could *she* protect anybody?

ELOISE [*with condescension*]. She has earned the gratitude—

VALSIN. Of whom?

ELOISE [*superbly*]. Of the Nation!

VALSIN [*breaking out again*]. Ha, ha, ha! [*Clutching at his side.*] Pardon, oh, pardon, liver of mine. I must not die; my life is still useful.

ELOISE [*persisting stormily*]. Of the People, stupidity! Of the whole People, dolt! Of France, blockhead!

VALSIN [*with a violent effort, conquering his hilarity*]. There! I am saved. Let us be solemn my child; it is better for my malady. You are still so young that one can instruct you that individuals are rarely grateful; "the People," never. What you call "the People" means folk who are not always sure of their next meal; therefore their great political and patriotic question is the cost of food. Their heroes are the champions who are going to make it cheaper; and when these champions fail them or cease to be useful to them, then they either forget these poor champions—or eat them. Let us hear what your Eloise d'Anville has done to earn the reward of being forgotten instead of eaten.

ELOISE [*her lips quivering*]. She surrendered her property voluntarily. She gave up all she owned to the Nation.

VALSIN [*genially*]. And immediately went to live with her relatives in great luxury.

ELOISE [*choking*]. The Republic will protect her. She gave her whole estate——

VALSIN. And the order for its confiscation was already written when she did it.

ELOISE [*passionately*]. Ah—*liar!*

VALSIN [*smiling*]. I have seen the order. [*She leans against the wall, breathing heavily. He goes on, smoothly.*] Yes, this martyr "gave" us her property; but one hears that she went to the opera just the same and wore more jewels than ever, and lived richly upon the Laseynes and Valny-Cheraults, until *they* were confiscated. Why, all the world knows about this woman; and let me tell you, to your credit, my governess, I think you have a charitable heart: you are the only person I ever heard speak kindly of her.

ELOISE [*setting her teeth*]. Venom!

VALSIN [*observing her slyly*]. It is with difficulty I am restraining my curiosity to see her—also to hear her!—when she learns of her proscription by a grateful Republic.

ELOISE [*with shrill mockery*]. Proscribed? Eloise d'Anville proscribed? Your inventions should be more plausible, Goodman Spy! I *knew* you were lying—

VALSIN [*smiling*]. You do not believe——

ELOISE [*proudly*]. Eloise d'Anville is a known Girondist. The Gironde is the real power in France.

VALSIN [*mildly*]. That party has fallen.

ELOISE [*with fire*]. Not far! It will revive.

VALSIN. Pardon, Citizeness, but you are behind the times, and they are very fast nowadays—the times. The Gironde is dead.

ELOISE [*ominously*]. It may survive *you*, my friend. Take care!

VALSIN [*unimpressed*]. The Gironde had a grand façade, and that was all. It was a party composed of amateurs and orators; and of course there were some noisy camp-followers and a few comic-opera vivandières, such as this d'Anville. In short, the Gironde looked enormous because it was hollow. It was like a pie that is all crust. We have tapped the crust—with a knife, Citizeness. There is nothing left.

ELOISE [*contemptuously*]. You say so. Nevertheless, the Rolands—

VALSIN [*gravely*]. Roland was found in a field yesterday; he had killed himself. His wife was guillotined the day after you left Paris. Every one of their political friends is proscribed.

ELOISE [*shaking as with bitter cold*]. It is a lie! Not Eloise d'Anville!

VALSIN [*rising*]. Would you like to see the warrant for her arrest? [*He takes a packet of documents from his breast pocket, selects one, and spreads it open before her.*] Let me read you her description: "Eloise d'Anville, aristocrat. Figure, comely. Complexion, blond. Eyes, dark blue. Nose, straight. Mouth, wide—"

ELOISE [*in a burst of passion, striking the warrant a violent blow with her clenched fist*]. Let them dare! [*Beside herself, she strikes again, tearing the paper from his grasp. She stamps upon it.*] Let them dare, I say!

VALSIN [*picking up the warrant*]. Dare to say her mouth is wide?

ELOISE [*cyclonic*]. Dare to arrest her!

VALSIN. It does seem a pity. [*He folds the warrant slowly and replaces it in his pocket.*] Yes, a great pity. She was the one amusing thing in all this sombreness. She will be missed. The Revolution will lack its joke.

ELOISE [*recoiling, her passion exhausted*]. Ah, infamy! [*She turns from him, covering her face with her hands.*]

VALSIN [*with a soothing gesture*]. Being only her friend, you speak mildly. The d'Anville herself would call it blasphemy.

ELOISE [*with difficulty*]. She is—so vain—then?

VALSIN [*lightly*]. Oh a type—an actress.

ELOISE [*her back to him*]. How do you know? You said——

VALSIN. That I had not encountered her. [*Glibly.*] One knows best the people one has never seen. Intimacy confuses judgment. I confess to that amount of hatred for the former Marquis de Valny-Cherault that I take as great an interest in all that concerns him as if I loved him. And the little d'Anville concerns him—yes, almost one would say, consumes him. The unfortunate man is said to be so blindly faithful that he can speak her name without laughing.

ELOISE [*stunned*]. Oh!

VALSIN [*going on, cheerily*]. No one else can do that, Citizeness. Jacobins, Cordeliers, Hébertists, even the shattered relics of the Gironde itself, all

alike join in the colossal laughter at this Tricoteuse in Sèvres—this Jeanne d'Arc in rice-powder!

ELOISE [*tragically*]. They laugh—and proclaim her an outlaw!

VALSIN [*waving his hand carelessly*]. Oh, it is only that we are sweeping up the last remnants of aristocracy, and she goes with the rest—into the dust-heap. She should have remained a royalist; the final spectacle might have had dignity. As it is, she is not of her own class, not of ours: neither fish, flesh, nor—but yes, perhaps, after all, she is a fowl.

ELOISE [*brokenly*]. Alas! Homing — with wounded wing! [*She sinks into a chair with pathetic grace, her face in her hands.*]

VALSIN [*surreptitiously grinning*]. Not at all what I meant. [*Brutally.*] Peacocks don't fly.

ELOISE [*regaining her feet at a bound*]. You imitation dandy! You——

VALSIN [*with benevolence*]. My dear, your indignation for your friend is chivalrous. It is admirable; but she is not worth it. You do not understand her: you have probably seen her so much that you have never seen her as she is.

ELOISE [*witheringly*]. But you, august Zeus, having *never* seen her, will reveal her to me!

VALSIN [*smoothly urbane*]. If you have ears. You see, she is not altogether unique, but of a variety known to men who are wise enough to make a study of women.

ELOISE [*snapping out a short, loud laugh in his face*]. *Pouff!*

VALSIN [*unruffled*]. I profess myself an apprentice. The science itself is but in its infancy. Women themselves understand very well that they are to be classified, and they fear that we shall perceive it: they do not really wish to be known. Yet it is coming; some day our cyclopedists will have you sorted, classed, and defined with precision; but the d'Alembert of the future will not be a woman, because no woman so disloyal will ever be found. Men have to acquire loyalty to their sex: yours is an instinct. Citizen governess, I will give you a reading of the little d'Anville from this unwritten work. To begin——

ELOISE [*feverishly interested, but affecting languor*]. *Must* you?

VALSIN. To Eloise d'Anville the most interesting thing about a rose-bush has always been that Eloise d'Anville could smell it. Moonlight becomes important when it falls upon her face; sunset is worthy when she grows rosy in it. To her mind, the universe was set in motion to be the background for a decoration, and she is the decoration. She believes that the cathedral was built for the fresco. And when a dog interests her, it is because he would look well beside her in a painting. Such dogs have no minds. I refer you to all the dogs in the portraits of Beauties.

ELOISE [*not at all displeased; pretending carelessness*]. Ah, you have heard that she is beautiful?

VALSIN. Far worse: that she is a Beauty. Let nothing ever tempt *you*, my dear, into setting up in that line. For you are very well-appearing,

I assure you; and if you had been surrounded with all the disadvantages of the d'Anville, who knows but that you might have become as famous a Beauty as she? What makes a Beauty is not the sumptuous sculpture alone, but a very peculiar arrogance—not in the least arrogance of mind, my little governess. In this your d'Anville emerged from childhood full-panoplied indeed; and the feather-head court fell headlong at her feet. It was the fated creature's ruin.

ELOISE [*placidly*]. And it is because of her beauty that you drag her to the guillotine?

VALSIN. Bless you, I merely convey her!

ELOISE. Tell me, logician, was it not her beauty that inspired her to give her property to the Nation?

VALSIN. It was.

ELOISE. What perception! I am faint with admiration. And no doubt it was her beauty that made her a Republican?

VALSIN. What else?

ELOISE. Hail, oracle! [*She releases an arpeggio of satiric laughter.*]

VALSIN. That laugh is diaphanous. I see you through it, already convinced. [*She stops laughing immediately.*] Ha! we may proceed. Remark this, governess: a Beauty is the living evidence of man's immortality; the one plain proof that he has a soul.

ELOISE. It is not so bad then, after all?

VALSIN. It is utterly bad. But of all people a Beauty is most conscious of her duality. Her

whole life is based upon her absolute knowledge that her Self and her body are two. She sacrifices all things to her beauty because her beauty feeds her Self with a dreadful food which it has made her unable to live without.

ELOISE. My little gentleman, you talk like a sentimental waiter. Your metaphors are all hot from the kitchen.

VALSIN [*nettled*]. It is natural; unlike your Eloise, I am *really* of "the People"—and starved much in my youth.

ELOISE. But, like her, you are still hungry.

VALSIN. A Beauty is a species of cannibal priestess, my dear. She will make burnt-offerings of her father and her mother, her sisters—her lovers—to her beauty, that it may in turn bring her the food she must have or perish.

ELOISE. *Boum!* [*She snaps her fingers.*] And of course she bathes in the blood of little children?

VALSIN [*grimly*]. Often.

ELOISE [*averting her gaze from his*]. This mysterious food——

VALSIN. Not at all mysterious. Sensation. There you have it. And that is why Eloise d'Anvillle is a renegade. You understand perfectly.

ELOISE. You are too polite. No.

VALSIN [*gaily*]. Behold, then! Many women who are not Beauties are beautiful, but in such women you do not always discover beauty at your first glance: it is disclosed with a subtle tardiness. It does not dazzle; it is reluctant; but it grows as

you look again and again. You get a little here, a little there, like glimpses of children hiding in a garden. It is shy, and sometimes closed in from you altogether, and then unexpectedly, this belated loveliness springs into bloom before your very eyes. It retains the capacity of surprise, the vital element of charm. But the Beauty lays all waste before her at a stroke: it is soon over. Thus your Eloise, brought to court, startled Versailles; the sensation was overwhelming. Then Versailles got used to her, just as it had to its other prodigies: the fountains were there, the King was there, the d'Anville was there; and naturally, one had seen them; saw them every day—one talked of matters less accepted. That was horrible to Eloise. She had tasted; the appetite, once stirred, was insatiable. At any cost she must henceforth have always the sensation of being a sensation. She must be the pivot of a reeling world. So she went into politics. Ah, Citizeness, there was one man who understood Beauties—not Homer, who wrote of Helen! Romance is gallant by profession, and Homer lied like a poet. For the truth about the Trojan War is that the wise Ulysses made it, not because Paris stole Helen, but because the Trojans were threatening to bring her back.

ELOISE [*unwarily*]. Who was the man that understood Beauties?

VALSIN. Bluebeard. [*He crosses the room to the dressing-table, leans his back against it in an easy attitude, his elbows resting upon the top.*]

ELOISE [*slowly, a little tremulously*]. And so

Eloise d'Anville should have her head cut off?

VALSIN. Well, she thought she was in politics, didn't she? [*Suavely.*] You may be sure she thoroughly enjoyed her hallucination that she was a great figure in the Revolution—which was cutting off the heads of so many of her relatives and old friends! Don't waste your pity, my dear.

ELOISE [*looking at him fixedly*]. Citizen, you must have thought a great deal about my unhappy friend. She might be flattered by so searching an interest.

VALSIN [*negligently*]. Not interest in her, governess, but in the Emigrant who cools his heels on the other side of that door, greatly to my enjoyment, waiting my pleasure to arrest him. The poor wretch is the one remaining lover of this girl: faithful because he let his passion for her become a habit; and he will never get over it until he has had possession. She has made him suffer frightfully, but I shall never forgive her for not having dealt him the final stroke. It would have saved me all the bother I have been put to in avenging the injury he did me.

ELOISE [*frowning*]. What "final stroke" could she have "dealt" him?

VALSIN [*with sudden vehement intensity*]. She could have loved him! [*He strikes the table with his fist.*] I see it! I see it! Beauty's husband! [*Pounding the table with each exclamation, his voice rising in excitement.*] What a vision! This damned, proud, loving Louis, a pomade bearer! A buttoner! An errand-boy to the perfumer's, to

the chemist's, to the milliner's! A groom of the powder-closet——

ELOISE [*snatching at the opportunity*]. How noisy you are!

VALSIN [*discomfited, apologetically*]. You see, it is only so lately that we of "the People" have dared even to whisper. Of course, now that we are free to shout, we overdo it. We let our voices out, we let our joys out, we let our hates out. We let everything out—except our prisoners! [*He smiles winningly.*]

ELOISE [*slowly*]. Do you guess what all this bluster—this tirade upon the wickedness of beauty —makes me think?

VALSIN. Certainly. Being a woman, you cannot imagine a bitterness which is not "personal."

ELOISE [*laughing*]. "Being a woman," I think that the person who has caused you the greatest suffering in your life must be very good-looking!

VALSIN [*calmly*]. Quite right. It was precisely this d'Anville. I will tell you. [*He sits on the arm of a chair near her, and continues briskly.*] I was not always a politician. Six years ago I was a soldier in the Valny regiment of cavalry. That was the old army, that droll army, that royal army; so ridiculous that it was truly majestic. In the Valny regiment we had some rouge-pots for officers —and for a colonel, who but our Emigrant yonder! Aha! we suffered in the ranks, let me tell you, when Eloise had been coy; and one morning it was my turn. You may have heard that she was betrothed first to Louis and later to several others? My

martyrdom occurred the day after she had announced to the court her betrothal to the young Duc de Creil, whose father afterward interfered. Louis put us on drill in a hard rain: he had the habit of relieving his chagrin like that. My horse fell, and happened to shower our commander with mud. Louis let out all his rage upon me: it was an excuse, and, naturally, he disliked mud. But I was rolling in it, with my horse: I also disliked it—and I was indiscreet enough to attempt some small reply. That finished my soldiering, Citizeness. He had me tied to a post before the barracks for the rest of the day. I remember with remarkable distinctness that the valets of heaven had neglected to warm the rain for that bath; that it was February; and that Louis's orders had left me nothing to wear upon my back except an unfulsome descriptive placard and my modesty. Altogether it was a disadvantageous position, particularly for the exchange of repartee with such of my comrades as my youthful amiability had not endeared; I have seldom seen more cheerful indifference to bad weather. Inclement skies failed to injure the spectacle: it was truly the great performance of my career; some people would not even go home to eat and peddlers did a good trade in cakes and wine. In the evening they whipped me conscientiously —my tailor has never since made me an entirely comfortable coat. Then they gave me the place of honour at the head of a procession by torchlight and drummed me out of camp with my placard upon my back. So I adopted another profession: I had

a friend who was a doctor in the stables of d'Artois; and I knew horses. He made me his assistant.

ELOISE [*shuddering*]. You are a veterinarian!

VALSIN [*smiling*]. No; a horse-doctor. It was thus I "retired" from the army and became a politician. My friend was only a horse-doctor himself, but his name happened to be Marat.

ELOISE. Ah, frightful! [*For the first time she begins to feel genuine alarm.*]

VALSIN. The sequence is simple. If Eloise d'Anville hadn't coquetted with young Creil I shouldn't be Commissioner here to-day, settling my account with Louis. I am in his debt for more than the beating: I should tell you there was a woman in my case, a slender lace-maker with dark eyes—very pretty eyes. She had furnished me with a rival, a corporal; and he brought her for a stroll in the rain past our barracks that day when I was attracting so much unsought attention. They waited for the afterpiece, enjoyed a pasty and a bottle of Beaune, and went away laughing cozily together. I did not see my pretty lace-maker again, not for years—not until a month ago. Her corporal was still with her, and it was their turn to be undesirably conspicuous. They were part of a procession passing along the Rue St. Honoré on its way to the Place of the Revolution. They were standing up in the cart; the lace-maker had grown fat, and she was scolding her poor corporal bitterly. What a habit that must have been!—they were not five minutes from the guillotine. I own that a thrill of gratitude to Louis temporarily

softened me toward him, though at the very moment I was following him through the crowd. At least he saved me from the lace-maker!

ELOISE [*shrinking from him*]. You are horrible!

VALSIN. To my regret you must find me more and more so.

ELOISE [*panting*]. You *are* going to take us back to Paris, then? To the Tribunal—and to the—— [*She covers her eyes with her hands.*]

VALSIN [*gravely*]. I can give you no comfort, governess. You are involved with the Emigrant, and, to be frank, I am going to do as horrible things to Louis as I can invent—and I am an ingenious man. [*His manner becomes sinister.*] I am near the top. The cinders of Marat are in the Pantheon but Robespierre still flames; and he claims me as his friend. I can do what I will. And I have much in store for Louis before he shall be so fortunate as to die!

ELOISE [*faintly*]. And—and Eloise—d'Anville? [*Her hands fall from her face: he sees large, beautiful tears upon her cheeks.*]

VALSIN [*coldly*]. Yes. [*She is crushed for the moment; then, recovering herself with a violent effort, lifts her head defiantly and stands erect, facing him.*]

ELOISE. You take her head because your officer punished you, six years ago, for a breach of military discipline!

VALSIN [*in a lighter tone*]. Oh no. I take it, just as she injured me—incidentally. In truth, Citizeness, it isn't I who take it: I only arrest her because the government has proscribed her.

ELOISE. And you've just finished telling me you were preparing tortures for her! I thought you an intelligent man. Pah! You're only a gymnast. [*She turns away from him haughtily and moves toward the door.*]

VALSIN [*touching his scarf of office*]. True. I climb. [*She halts suddenly, as if startled by this; she stands as she is, her back to him, for several moments, and does not change her attitude when she speaks.*]

ELOISE [*slowly*]. You climb alone.

VALSIN [*with a suspicious glance at her*]. Yes—alone.

ELOISE [*in a low voice*]. Why didn't you take the lace-maker with you? You might have been happier. [*Very slowly she turns and comes toward him, her eyes full upon his: she moves deliberately and with incomparable grace. He seems to be making an effort to look away, and failing: he cannot release his eyes from the glorious and starry glamour that holds them. She comes very close to him, so close that she almost touches him.*]

ELOISE [*in a half-whisper*]. You might have been happier with—a friend—to climb with you.

VALSIN [*demoralized*]. Citizeness—I am—I———

ELOISE [*in a voice of velvet*]. Yes, say it. You are——

VALSIN [*desperately*]. I have told you that I am the most susceptible of men.

ELOISE [*impulsively putting her hand on his shoulder*]. Is it a crime? Come, my friend, you are a man who *does* climb: you will go over all. You believe in the Revolution because you have

used it to lift you. But other things can help you; too. Don't you need them?

VALSIN [*understanding perfectly, gasping*]. Need what? [*She draws her hand from his shoulder, moves back from him slightly, and crosses her arms upon her bosom with a royal meekness.*]

ELOISE [*grandly*]. Do I seem so useless?

VALSIN [*in a distracted voice*]. Heaven help me! What do you want?

ELOISE. Let these people go. [*Hurriedly, leaning near him.*] I have promised to save them: give them their permit to embark, and I—— [*She pauses, flushing beautifully, but does not take her eyes from him.*] I—I do not wish to leave France. My place is in Paris. You will go into the National Committee. You can be its ruler. You *will* rule it! I believe in you! [*Glowing like a rose of fire.*] I will go with you. I will help you! I will marry you!

VALSIN [*in a fascinated whisper*]. Good Lord! [*He stumbles back from her, a strange light in his eyes.*]

ELOISE. You are afraid——

VALSIN [*with sudden loudness*]. I am! Upon my soul, I am afraid!

ELOISE [*smiling gloriously upon him.*] Of what, my friend? Tell me of what?

VALSIN [*explosively*]. Of myself! I am afraid of myself because I am a prophet. This is precisely what I foretold to myself you would do! I knew it, yet I am aghast when it happens—aghast at my own cleverness!

ELOISE [*bewildered to blankness.*] What?

VALSIN [*half hysterical with outrageous vanity*]. I swear I knew it, and it fits so exactly that I am afraid of myself! *Aha*, Valsin, you rogue! I should hate to have you on *my* track! Citizen governess, you are a wonderful person, but not so wonderful as this devil of a Valsin!

ELOISE [*vaguely, in a dead voice*]. I cannot understand what you are talking about. Do you mean——

VALSIN. And what a spell was upon me! I was near calling Dossonville to preserve me.

ELOISE [*speaking with a strange naturalness, like a child's*]. You mean—you don t want me?

VALSIN. Ah, Heaven help me, I am going to laugh again! Oh, ho, ho! I am spent! [*He drops into a chair and gives way to another attack of uproarious hilarity.*] Ah, ha, ha, ha! Oh, my liver, ha, ha! No, Citizeness, I do not want you! Oh, ha, ha, ha!

ELOISE. *Oh!* [*She utters a choked scream and rushes at him.*] Swine!

VALSIN [*warding her off with outstretched hands*]. Spare me! Ha, ha, ha! I am helpless! Ho, ho, ho! Citizeness, it would not be worth your while to strangle a man who is already dying!

ELOISE [*beside herself*]. Do you dream that I *meant* it?

VALSIN [*feebly*]. Meant to strangle me?

ELOISE [*frantic*]. To give myself to you!

VALSIN. In short, to—to marry me! [*He splutters.*]

ELOISE [*furiously*]. It was a ruse——

VALSIN [*soothingly*]. Yes, yes, a trick. I saw that all along.

ELOISE [*even more infuriated*]. For their sake, beast! [*She points to the other room.*] To save *them!*

VALSIN [*wiping his eyes*]. Of course, of course. [*He rises, stepping quickly to the side of the chair away from her and watching her warily.*] *I* knew it was to save them. We'll put it like that.

ELOISE [*in an anger of exasperation*]. It *was* that!

VALSIN. Yes, yes. [*Keeping his distance.*] I saw it from the first. [*Suppressing symptoms of returning mirth.*] It was perfectly plain. You mustn't excite yourself—nothing could have been clearer! [*A giggle escapes him, and he steps hastily backward as she advances upon him.*]

ELOISE. Poodle! Valet! Scum of the alleys! Sheep of the prisons! Jailer! Hangman! Assassin! Brigand! *Horse-doctor!* [*She hurls the final epithet at him in a climax of ferocity which wholly exhausts her; and she sinks into the chair by the desk, with her arms upon the desk and her burning face hidden in her arms.* VALSIN, *morbidly chuckling, in spite of himself, at each of her insults, has retreated farther and farther, until he stands with his back against the door of the inner room, his right hand behind him, resting on the latch. As her furious eyes leave him he silently opens the door, letting it remain a few inches ajar and keeping his back to it. Then, satisfied that what he intends to say will be overheard by those within, he erases all expression from his face, and strides to the dismantled doorway in the passage.*]

VALSIN [*calling loudly*]. Dossonville! [*He returns, coming down briskly to* ELOISE. *His tone is crisp and soldier-like.*] Citizeness, I have had my great hour. I proceed with the arrests. I have given you four plenty of time to prepare yourselves. Time? Why, the Emigrant could have changed clothes with one of the women in there a dozen times if he had hoped to escape in that fashion—as historical prisoners *have* won clear, it is related. Fortunately, that is impossible just now; and he will not dare to attempt it.

DOSSONVILLE [*appearing in the hallway*]. Present, my chieftain!

VALSIN [*sharply*]. Attend, Dossonville. The returned Emigrant, Valny-Cherault, is forfeited; but because I cherish a special grievance against him, I have decided upon a special punishment for him. It does not please me that he should have the comfort and ministrations of loving women on his journey to the Tribunal. No, no; the presence of his old sweetheart would make even the scaffold sweet to him. Therefore I shall take him alone. I shall let these women go.

DOSSONVILLE. What refinement! Admirable! [ELOISE *slowly rises, staring incredulously at* VALSIN.]

VALSIN [*picking up the "permit" from the desk*]. "Permit the Citizen Balsage and his sister, the Citizeness Virginie Balsage and his second sister, Marie Balsage, and Eloise d'Anville——" Ha! You see, Dossonville, since one of these three women is here, there are two in the other room with

the Emigrant. They are to come out, leaving him there. First, however, we shall disarm him. You and I have had sufficient experience in arresting aristocrats to know that they are not always so sensible as to give themselves up peaceably, and I happened to see the outline of a pistol under the Emigrant's frock the other day in the diligence. We may as well save one of us from a detestable hole through the body. [*He steps toward the door, speaking sharply.*] Emigrant, you have heard. For your greater chagrin, these three devoted women are to desert you. Being an aristocrat you will pretend to prefer this arrangement. They are to leave at once. Throw your pistol into this room, and I will agree not to make the arrest until they are in safety. They can reach your vessel in five minutes. When they have gone, I give you my word not to open this door for ten. [*A pistol is immediately thrown out of the door, and falls at* VALSIN'S *feet. He picks it up, his eyes alight with increasing excitement.*]

VALSIN [*tossing the pistol to* DOSSONVILLE]. Call the lieutenant. [DOSSONVILLE *goes to the window, leans out, and beckons.* VALSIN *writes hastily at the desk, not sitting down.*] "Permit the three women Balsage to embark without delay upon the *Jeune Pierrette.* Signed: Valsin." There, Citizeness, is a "permit" which permits. [*He thrusts the paper into the hand of* ELOISE, *swings toward the door of the inner room, and raps loudly upon it.*] Come, my feminines! Your sailors await you—brave, but no judges of millinery. There's a fair wind for

you; and a grand toilet is wasted at sea. Come, charmers; come! [*The door is half opened, and* MADAME DE LASEYNE, *white and trembling violently enters quickly, shielding as much as she can the inexpressibly awkward figure of her brother, behind whom she extends her hand, closing the door sharply.* He *wears the brocaded skirt which* MADAME DE LASEYNE *has taken from the portmanteau, and* ELOISE'S *long mantle, the lifted hood and* MADAME DE LASEYNE'S *veil shrouding his head and face.*]

VALSIN [*in a stifled voice*]. At last! At last one beholds the regal d'Anville! No Amazon——

DOSSONVILLE [*aghast*]. It looks like——

VALSIN [*shouting*]. It doesn't! [*He bows gallantly to* LOUIS.] A cruel veil, but, oh, what queenly grace! [*Louis stumbles in the skirt.* VALSIN *falls back, clutching at his side. But* ELOISE *rushes to* LOUIS *and throws herself upon her knees at his feet. She pulls his head down to hers and kisses him through the veil.*]

VALSIN [*madly*]. Oh, touching devotion! Oh, sisters! Oh, love! Oh, honey! Oh, petticoats——

DOSSONVILLE [*interrupting humbly*]. The lieutenant, Citizen Commissioner. [*He points to the hallway, where the officer appears, standing at attention.*]

VALSIN [*wheeling*]. Officer, conduct these three persons to the quay. Place them on board the *Jeune Pierrette.* The captain will weigh anchor instantly. [*The officer salutes.*]

ANNE [*hoarsely to* LOUIS, *who is lifting the weeping* ELOISE *to her feet*]. Quick! In the name of——

VALSIN. Off with you! [MADAME DE LASEYNE *seizes the portmanteau and rushes to the broken doorway, half dragging the others with her. They go out in a tumultuous hurry, followed by the officer.* ELOISE *sends one last glance over her shoulder at* VALSIN *as she disappears, and one word of concentrated venom:* "Buffoon!" *In wild spirits he blows a kiss to her. The fugitives are heard clattering madly down the stairs.*]

DOSSONVILLE [*excitedly*]. We can take the Emigrant now. [*Going to the inner door.*] Why wait——

VALSIN. That room is empty.

DOSSONVILLE. What!

VALSIN [*shouting with laughter*]. He's gone! Not bare-backed, but in petticoats: that's worse! He's gone, I tell you! The other was the d'Anville.

DOSSONVILLE. Then you recog——

VALSIN. Imbecile, she's as well known as the Louvre! They're off on their honeymoon! She'll take him now! She will! She will, on the soul of a prophet! [*He rushes to the window and leans far out, shouting at the top of his voice:*] *Quits with you, Louis! Quits! Quits!* [*He falls back from the window and relapses into a chair, cackling ecstatically.*]

DOSSONVILLE [*hoarse with astonishment*]. You've let him go! You've let 'em *all* go!

VALSIN [*weak with laughter*]. Well, *you're* not going to inform. [*With a sudden reversion to extreme seriousness, he levels a sinister forefinger at his companion.*] And, also, take care of your health,

friend; remember constantly that you have a weak throat, *and don't you ever mention this to my wife!* These are bad times, my Dossonville, and neither you nor I will see the end of them. Good Lord! Can't we have a little fun as we go along? [*A fresh convulsion seizes him, and he rocks himself pitiably in his chair.*]

[THE CURTAIN]

FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

BY

JOSEPHINE PRESTON PEABODY

*FORTUNE AND MEN'S EYES

"When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes . . ."

Sonnet xxix.

CHARACTERS

WILLIAM HERBERT, *son of the Earl of Pembroke.*
SIMEON DYER, *a Puritan.*
TOBIAS, *host of "The Bear and The Angel."*
WAT BURROW, *a bear-ward.*
DICKON, *a little boy, son to* TOBIAS.
CHIFFIN, *a ballad-monger.*
A PRENTICE.
A PLAYER, *master W. S. of the Lord Chamberlain's Company.*
MISTRESS MARY FYTTON, *a maid-of-honour to Queen Elizabeth.*
MISTRESS ANNE HUGHES, *also of the Court.*
TAVERNERS AND PRENTICES.

Time represented: An afternoon in the autumn of the year 1599.

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SCENE.—Interior of "The Bear and the Angel," South London. At back, the centre entrance gives on a short alley-walk which joins the street beyond at a right angle. To right and left of this doorway, casements. Down, on the right, a door opening upon the inn-garden; a second door on the right, up, leading to a tap-room. Opposite this, left, a door leading into a buttery. Opposite the garden-door, a large chimney-piece with a smouldering wood-fire. A few seats; a lantern (unlighted) in a corner. In the foreground, to the right, a long and narrow table with several mugs of ale upon it, also a lute.

At one end of the table WAT BURROW *is finishing his ale and holding forth to the* PRENTICE (*who thrums the lute*) *and a group of taverners, some smoking. At the further end of the table* SIMEON DYER *observes all with grave curiosity.* TOBIAS *and* DICKON *draw near. General noise.*

PRENTICE [*singing*].

What do I give for the Pope and his riches!
I's my ale and my Sunday breeches;
I's an old master, I's a young lass,
And we'll eat green goose, come Martinmas!
Sing Rowdy Dowdy,
Look ye don't crowd me:
I's a good club,
—So let me pass!

DICKON.

Again! again!

PRENTICE. *Sing Rowdy*——

WAT [*finishing his beer*]. Swallow it down.
Sling all such froth and follow me to the Bear!
They stay for me, lined up to see us pass
From end to end o' the alley. Ho! You doubt?
From Lambeth to the Bridge!

TAVERNERS. } 'Tis so; ay.
PRENTICES. } Come, follow! Come.

WAT. Greg's stuck his ears
With nosegays, and his chain is wound about
Like any May-pole. What? I tell ye, boys,
Ye have seen no such bear, a Bear o' Bears,
Fit to bite off the prophet, in the show,
With seventy such boys!
[*Pulling* DICKON'S *ear*]. Bears, say you; bears?
Why, Rursus Major, as your scholars tell,
A royal bear, the greatest in his day,
The sport of Alexander, unto Nick—
Was a ewe-lamb, dyed black; no worse, no worse.
To-morrow come and see him with the dogs;
He'll not give way,—not he!

DICKON. To-morrow's Thursday!
To-morrow's Thursday!

PRENTICE. Will ye lead by here?

TOBIAS.
Ay, that would be a sight. Wat, man, this way!

WAT.
Ho, would you squinch us? Why there be a press

O' gentry by this tide to measure Nick
And lay their wagers, at a blink of him,
Against to-morrow! Why, the stairs be full.
To-morrow you shall see the Bridge a-creak,
The river—dry with barges,—London gape,
Gape! While the Borough buzzes like a hive
With all their worships! Sirs, the fame o' Nick
Has so pluckt out the gentry by the sleeve,
'Tis said the Queen would see him.

TOBIAS. } Ay, 'tis grand.
DICKON. } O-oh, the Queen?

PRENTICE.

How now? Thou art no man to lead a bear,
Forgetting both his quality and hers!
Drink all; come, drink to her.

TOBIAS. Ay, now.

WAT. To her!——
And harkee, boy, this saying will serve you learn:
"The Queen, her high and glorious majesty!"

SIMEON [*gravely*].

Long live the Queen!

WAT. Maker of golden laws
For baitings! She that cherishes the Borough
And shines upon our pastimes. By the mass!
Thank her for the crowd to-morrow. But for her,
We were a homesick handful of brave souls
That love the royal sport. These mouthing players,
These hookers, would 'a' spoiled us of our beer——

PRENTICE.
Lying by to catch the gentry at the stairs—
All pressing to Bear Alley——
WAT. Run 'em in
At stage-plays and show-fooleries on the way.
Stage-plays, with their tart nonsense and their flags.
Their "Tamerlanes" and "Humors" and what not!
My life on't, there was not a man of us
But fared his Lent, by reason of their fatness,
And on a holiday ate not at all!
TOBIAS [*solemnly*].
'Tis so; 'tis so.
WAT. But when she heard it told
How lean the sport was grown, she damns stage-plays
O' Thursday. So: Nick gets his turn to growl!
PRENTICE.
As well as any player.
[*With a dumb show of ranting among the* TAVERNERS.]
WAT. Players?—Hang them!
I know 'em, I. I've been with 'em. . . . I was
As sweet a gentlewoman in my voice
As any of your finches that sings small.
TOBIAS. 'Twas high.
[*Enter* THE PLAYER, *followed by* CHIFFIN, *the ballad-monger. He is abstracted and weary.*]
WAT [*lingering at the table*].
I say, I've played. . . . There's not one man

Of all the gang—save one . . . Ay, there be one
I grant you, now! . . . He used me in right sort;
A man worth better trades.
[*Seeing* THE PLAYER.]
—Lord love you, sir!
Why, this is you indeed. 'Tis a long day, sir,
Since I clapped eyes on you. But even now
Your name was on my tongue as pat as ale!
You see me off. We bait to-morrow, sir;
Will you come see? Nick's fresh, and every soul
As hot to see the fight as 'twere to be—
Man Daniel, baited with the lions!

TOBIAS. Sir,
'Tis nigh . . . 'tis high.

WAT. We show him in the street
With dogs and all, ay, now, if you will see.

THE PLAYER.
Why, so I will. A show and I not there?
Bear it out bravely, Wat. High fortune, man!
Commend me to thy bear.
[*Drinks and passes him the cup.*]

WAT. Lord love you, sir!
'Twas ever so you gave a man godspeed. . . .
And yet your spirits flag; you look but palely.
I'll take your kindness, thank ye.
[*Turning away.*]
In good time!
Come after me and Nick, now. Follow all;
Come boys, come, pack!

[*Exit* WAT, *still descanting. Exeunt most of the* TAVERNERS, *with the* PRENTICE. SIMEON DYER *draws near* THE PLAYER, *regarding him gravely.* CHIFFIN *sells ballads to those who go out.* DICKON *is about to follow them, when* TOBIAS *stops him.*]

TOBIAS.

What? Not so fast, you there;
Who gave you holiday? Bide by the inn;
Tend on our gentry.

[*Exit after the crowd.*]

CHIFFIN. Ballads, gentlemen?
Ballads, new ballads?

SIMEON [*to* THE PLAYER.]

With your pardon, sir,
I am gratified to note your abstinence
From this deplorable fond merriment
Of baiting of a bear.

THE PLAYER. Your friendship then
Takes pleasure in the heaviness of my legs.
But I am weary, I would see the bear.
Nay, rest you happy; malt shall comfort us.

SIMEON.

You do mistake me. I am——

CHIFFIN. Ballad, sir?
"How a Young Spark Would Woo a Tanner's Wife,
And She Sings Sweet in Turn."

SIMEON [*indignantly*]. Abandoned poet!

CHIFFIN [*indignantly*].

I'm no such thing! An honest ballad, sir,
No poetry at all.

THE PLAYER.

Good, sell thy wares.

CHIFFIN.

"A Ballad of a Virtuous Country-Maid
Forswears the Follies of the Flaunting Town"——
And tends her geese all day, and weds a vicar.

SIMEON.

A godlier tale, in sooth. But speak, my man;
If she be virtuous, and the tale a true one,
Can she not do't in prose?

THE PLAYER. Beseech her, man.
'Tis scandal she should use a measure so.
For no more sin than dealing out false measure
Was Dame Sapphira slain.

SIMEON. You are with me, sir;
Although methinks you do mistake the sense
O' that you have read. . . . This jigging, jog-trot rime.
This ring-me-round, debaseth mind and matter,
To make the reason giddy——

CHIFFIN [*to* THE PLAYER].

Ballad, sir?
"Hear All!" A fine brave ballad of a Fish
Just caught off Dover; nay, a one-eyed fish,
With teeth in double rows.

THE PLAYER. Nay, nay, go to.

CHIFFIN.

"My Fortune's Folly," then; or "The True Tale
Of an Angry Gull;" or "Cherries Like Me Best."

"Black Sheep, or How a Cut-Purse Robbed
His Mother;"
"The Prentice and the Dell! . . . Plays
Play not Fair,"
Or how a *gentlewoman's* heart was took
By a player that was king in a stage-play. . .
"The Merry Salutation," "How a Spark
Would Woo a Tanner's Wife!" "The Direful Fish"——
Cock's passion, sir! not buy a cleanly ballad
Of the great fish, late ta'en off Dover coast,
Having two heads and teeth in double
rows. . . .
Salt fish catched in fresh water? . . .
'Od's my life!
What if or salt or fresh? A prodigy!
A ballad like "Hear All!" And me and mine,
Five children and a wife would bait the devil,
May lap the water out o' Lambeth Marsh
Before he'll buy a ballad. My poor wife,
That lies a-weeping for a tansy-cake!
Body o' me, shall I scent ale again?

THE PLAYER.

Why, here's persuasion; logic, arguments.
Nay, not the ballad. Read for thine own joy.
I doubt not but it stretches, honest length,
From Maid Lane to the Bridge and so across.
But for thy length of thirst——
[*Giving him a coin.*]
That touches near.

CHIFFIN [*apart*].

A vagrom player, would not buy a tale

O' the Great Fish with the twy rows o' teeth!
Learn you to read! [*Exit.*]

SIMEON.

Thou seemest, sir, from that I have overheard;
A man, as one should grant, beyond thy calling. . . .
I would I might assure thee of the way,
To urge thee quit this painted infamy.
There may be time, seeing thou art still young,
To pluck thee from the burning. How are ye 'stroyed,
Ye foolish grasshoppers! Cut off, forgotten,
When moth and rust corrupt your flaunting shows,
The Earth shall have no memory of your name!

DICKON.

Pray you, what's yours?

SIMEON. I am called Simeon Dyer.

[*There is the sudden uproar of a crowd in the distance. It continues at intervals for some time.*]

PRENTICES. { Hey, lads?
Some noise beyond: Come, cudgels; come!
Come on, come on, I'm for it.

[*Exeunt all but* THE PLAYER, SIMEON, *and* DICKON.]

SIMEON.

Something untoward, without: or is it rather
The tumult of some uproar incident
To this . . . vicinity?

THE PLAYER. It is an uproar
Most incident to bears.
DICKON. I would I knew!
THE PLAYER [*holding him off at arm's length*].
Hey, boy? We would have tidings of the bear:
Go thou, I'll be thy surety. Mark him well.
Omit no fact; I would have all of it:
What manner o' bear he is,—how bears himself;
Number and pattern of ears, and eyes what hue;
His voice and fashion o' coat. Nay, come not back,
Till thou hast all. Skip, sirrah!
[*Exit* DICKON.]
SIMEON. Think, fair sir.
Take this new word of mine to be a seed
Of thought in that neglected garden plot,
Thy mind, thy worthier part. But think!
THE PLAYER. Why, so;
Thou hast some right, friend; now and then it serves.
Sometimes I have thought, and even now sometimes, . . . I think.
SIMEON [*benevolently*]. Heaven ripen thought unto an harvest! [*Exit.*]
[THE PLAYER *rises, stretches his arms, and paces the floor, wearily.*]
THE PLAYER [*alone*].
Some quiet now. . . . Why should I thirst for it

As if my thoughts were noble company?
Alone with the one man of all living men
I have least cause to honour. . . .
I'm no lover,
That seek to be alone! . . . She is too false——
At last, to keep a spaniel's loyalty.
I do believe it. And by my own soul,
She shall not have me, what remains of me
That may be beaten back into the ranks.
I will not look upon her. . . . Bitter Sweet.
This fever that torments me day by day—
Call it not love—this servitude, this spell
That haunts me like a sick man's fantasy,
With pleading of her eyes, her voice, her eyes——
It shall not have me. I am too much stained:
But, God or no God, yet I do not live
And have to bear my own soul company,
To have it stoop so low. She looks on Herbert.
Oh, I have seen. But he,—he must withstand.
He knows that I have suffered,—suffer still—
Although I love her not. Her ways, her ways—
It is her ways that eat into the heart
With beauty more than Beauty; and her voice
That silvers o'er the meaning of her speech
Like moonshine on black waters. Ah, uncoil! . . .

He's the sure morning after this dark dream;
Clear daylight and west wind of a lad's love;
With all his golden pride, for my dull hours,
Still climbing sunward! Sink all loves in him!
And cleanse me of this cursèd, fell distrust
That marks the pestilence. . . .
'Fair, kind, and true.'
Lad, lad. How could I turn from friendliness
To worship such false gods?——
There cannot thrive a greater love than this,
'Fair, kind, and true.' And yet, if She were true
To me, though false to all things else;—one truth,
So one truth lived—. One truth! O beggared soul,
—Foul Lazarus, so starved it can make shift
To feed on crumbs of honour!—Am I this?
[*Enter* ANNE HUGHES. *She has been running in evident terror, and stands against the door looking about her.*]

ANNE.

Are you the inn-keeper?
[THE PLAYER *turns and bows courteously.*]
Nay, sir, your pardon.
I saw you not. . . . And yet your face, methinks,
But—yes, I'm sure. . . .
But where's the inn-keeper?
I know not where I am, nor where to go.

THE PLAYER.

Madam, it is my fortune that I may

Procure you service. [*Going towards the door. The uproar sounds nearer.*]

ANNE. Nay! what if the bear——

THE PLAYER.

The bear?

ANNE.

The door! The bear is broken loose.
Did you not hear? I scarce could make my way
Through that rank crowd, in search of some safe place.
You smile, sir! But you had not seen the bear,—
Nor I, this morning. Pray you, hear me out,—
For surely you are gentler than the place.
I came . . . I came by water . . . to the Garden,
Alone, . . . from bravery, to see the show
And tell of it hereafter at the Court!
There's one of us makes count of all such 'scapes
('Tis Mistress Fytton). She will ever tell
The sport it is to see the people's games
Among themselves,—to go *incognita*
And take all as it is not for the Queen,
Gallants and rabble! But by Banbury Cross,
I am of tamer mettle!—All alone,
Among ten thousand noisy watermen;
And then the foul ways leading from the Stair;
And then . . . no friends I knew, nay, not a face.

And my dear nose beset, and my pomander
Lost in the rout,—or else a cut-purse had it:
And then the bear breaks loose! Oh, 'tis a day
Full of vexations, nay, and dangers too.
I would I had been slower to outdo
The pranks of Mary Fytton. . . . You know her, sir?

THE PLAYER.

If one of my plain calling may be said
To know a maid-of-honour. [*More lightly.*] And yet more:
My heart has cause to know the lady's face.

ANNE [*blankly*].

Why, so it is. . . . Is't not a marvel, sir,
The way she hath? Truly, her voice is good. . . .
And yet,—but oh, she charms; I hear it said.
A winsome gentlewoman, of a wit, too.
We are great fellows; she tells me all she does;
And, sooth, I listen till my ears be like
To grow for wonder. Whence my 'scape, to-day!
Oh, she hath daring for the pastimes here;
I would—change looks with her, to have her spirit!
Indeed, they say she charms Someone, by this.

THE PLAYER

Someone. . . .

ANNE. Hast heard?
Why sure, my Lord of Herbert.
Ay, Pembroke's son. But there I doubt,—I doubt.

He is an eagle will not stoop for less
Than kingly prey. No bird-lime takes him.

THE PLAYER. Herbert. . . .
He hath shown many favours to us players.

ANNE.
Ah, now I have you!

THE PLAYER. Surely, gracious madam;
My duty; . . . what besides?

ANNE. This face of yours.
'Twas in some play, belike. [*Apart.*] . . .
I took him for
A man it should advantage me to know!
And he's a proper man enough. . . . Ay me!
[*When she speaks to him again it is with encouraging condescension.*]
Surely you've been at Whitehall, Master Player?

THE PLAYER [*bowing*].
So.

ANNE. And how oft? And when?

THE PLAYER. Last Christmas tide;
And Twelfth Day eve, perchance. Your memory
Freshens a dusty past. . . . The hubbub's over.
Shall I look forth and find some trusty boy
To attend you to the river?

ANNE. I thank you, sir.
[*He goes to the door and steps out into the alley looking up and down. The noise in the distance springs up again.*]

[*Apart.*] 'Tis not past sufferance. Marry, I could stay
Some moments longer, till the streets be safe.
Sir, sir!

THE PLAYER [*returning*].
Command me, madam.

ANNE. I will wait
A little longer, lest I meet once more
That ruffian mob or any of the dogs.
These sports are better seen from balconies.

THE PLAYER.
Will you step hither? There's an arboured walk
Sheltered and safe. Should they come by again,
You may see all, an't like you, and be hid.

ANNE.
A garden there? Come, you shall show it me.

[*They go out into the garden on the right, leaving the door shut. Immediately enter, in great haste,* MARY FYTTON *and* WILLIAM HERBERT, *followed by* DICKON, *who looks about and, seeing no one, goes to setting things in order.*]

MARY.
Quick, quick! . . . She must have seen me. Those big eyes,
How could they miss me, peering as she was
For some familiar face? She would have known,
Even before my mask was jostled off

In that wild rabble . . . bears and bearish men.

HERBERT.

Why would you have me bring you?

MARY. Why? Ah, why!
Sooth, once I had a reason: now 'tis lost,—
Lost! Lost! Call out the bell-man.

DICKON [*seriously*]. Shall I so?

HERBERT.

Nay, nay; that were a merriment indeed,
To cry us through the streets! [*To* MARY.]
You riddling charm.

MARY.

A riddle, yet? You almost love me, then.

HERBERT.

Almost?

MARY.

Because you cannot understand.
Alas, when all's unriddled, the charm goes.

HERBERT.

Come, you're not melancholy?

MARY. Nay, are you?
But should Nan Hughes have seen us, and spoiled all——

HERBERT.

How could she so?

MARY. I know not . . . yet I know
If she had met us, she could steal To-day,
Golden To-day.

HERBERT. A kiss; and so forget her.

MARY.

Hush, hush,—the tavern-boy there.

[*To* DICKON.] Tell me, boy,——
[*To* HERBERT.] Some errand, now; a roc's egg!
Strike thy wit.

HERBERT.

What is't you miss? Why, so. The lady's lost
A very curious reason, wrought about
With diverse broidery.

MARY. Nay, 'twas a mask.

HERBERT.

A mask, arch-wit? Why will you mock yourself
And all your fine deceits? Your mask, your reason,
Your reason with a mask!

MARY. You are too merry.
[*To* DICKON.] A mask it is, and muffler finely wrought
With little amber points all hung like bells.
I lost it as I came, somewhere. . . .

HERBERT. Somewhere
Between the Paris Gardens and the Bridge.

MARY.

Or below Bridge—or haply in the Thames!

HERBERT.

No matter where, so you do bring it back.
Fly, Mercury! Here's feathers for thy heels.
[*Giving coin.*]

MARY [*aside*].

Weights, weights! [*Exit* DICKON.]
[*Herbert looks about him, opens the door of the taproom, grows troubled. She watches*

him with dissatisfaction, seeming to warm her feet by the fire meanwhile.]

HERBERT [*apart*].

I know this place. We used to come
Together, he and I. . . .

MARY [*apart*]. Forgot again.
O the capricious tides, the hateful calms,
And the too eager ship that would be gone
Adventuring against uncertain winds,
For some new, utmost sight of Happy Isles!
Becalmed,—becalmed . . . But I will break this calm.

[*She sees the lute on the table, crosses and takes it up, running her fingers over the strings very softly. She sits.*]

HERBERT.

Ah, mermaid, is it you?

MARY. Did you sail far?

HERBERT.

Not I; no, sooth. [*Crossing to her.*]
Mermaid, I would not think.
But you——

MARY.

I think not. I remember nothing.
There's nothing in the world but you and me;
All else is dust. Thou shalt not question me;
Or if,—but as a sphinx in woman-shape:
And when thou fail'st at answer, I shall turn,
And rend thy heart and cast thee from the cliff.

[*She leans her head back against him, and he kisses her.*]

So perish all who guess not what I am! . . .

Oh, but I know you: you are April-Days.
Nothing is sure, but all is beautiful!
[*She runs her fingers up the strings, one by one, and listens, speaking to the lute.*]
Is it not so? Come, answer. Is it true?
Speak, sweeting, since I love thee best of late,
And have forsook my virginals for thee.
All's beautiful indeed and all unsure?
"Ay" . . . (Did you hear?) *He's fair and faithless? "Ay."* [*Speaking with the lute.*]

HERBERT.

Poor oracle, with only one reply!——
Wherein 'tis unlike thee.

MARY. *Can he love aught*
So well as his own image in the brook,
Having once seen it?

HERBERT. Ay!

MARY. The lute saith *"No."* . . .
O dullard! Here were tidings, would you mark
What said I? *Oracle, can he love aught*
So dear as his own image in the brook,
Having once looked? . . . No, truly.
[*With sudden abandon.*] Nor can I!

HERBERT.

O leave this game of words, you thousand-tongued.
Sing, sing to me. So shall I be all yours
Forever;—or at least till you be mute! . . .
I used to wonder he should be thy slave:
I wonder now no more. Your ways are wonders;

You have a charm to make a man forget
His past and yours, and everything but you.

MARY [*speaking*].

"When daisies pied and violets blue
And lady-smocks all silver-white"——
How now?

HERBERT.

"How now?" That song . . . thou wilt sing that?

MARY.

Marry, what mars the song?

HERBERT. Have you forgot
Who made it?

MARY. Soft, what idleness! So fine?
So rude? And bid me sing! You get but silence;
Or, if I sing,—beshrew me, it shall be
A dole of song, a little starveling breath
As near to silence as a song can be.
[*She sings under-breath, fantastically.*]
Say how many kisses be
Lent and lost twixt you and me?
'Can I tell when they begun?'
Nay, but this were prodigal:
Let us learn to count withal.
Since no ending is to spending,
Sum our riches, one by one.
'You shall keep the reckoning,
Count each kiss while I do sing.'

HERBERT.

Oh, not these little wounds. You vex my heart;

Heal it again with singing,—come, sweet, come
Into the garden! None shall trouble us.
This place has memories and conscience too:
Drown all, my mermaid. Wind them in your hair
And drown them, drown them all.
[*He swings open the garden-door for her. At the same moment* ANNE'S *voice is heard approaching.*]

ANNE [*without*]. Some music there?

HERBERT.

Perdition! Quick,—behind me, love.
[*Swinging the door shut again, and looking through the crack.*]

MARY.

'Tis she——
Nan Hughes, 'tis she! How came she here? By heaven,
She crosses us to-day. Nan Hughes lights here
In a Bank tavern! Nay, I'll not be seen.
Sooner or later it must mean the wreck
Of both . . . should the Queen know.

HERBERT. The spite of chance!
She talks with someone in the arbour there
Whose face I see not. Come, here's doors at least.
[*They cross hastily.* MARY *opens the door on the left and looks within.*]

MARY.

Too thick. . . . I shall be penned. But guard you this

And tell me when they're gone. Stay, stay;—
mend all.
If she have seen me,—swear it was not I.
Heaven speed her home, with her new body-
guard!
[*Exit, closing door.* HERBERT *looks out into the garden.*]

HERBERT.

By all accursèd chances,—none but he!
[*Retires up to stand beside the door, looking out of casement. Reënter from the garden,* ANNE *followed by* THE PLAYER.]

ANNE.

No, 'twas some magic in my ears, I think.
There's no one here. [*Seeing* HERBERT.]
But yes, there's someone here:—
The inn-keeper. Are you——
Saint Catherine's bones!
My Lord of Herbert. Sir, you could not
look
More opportune. But for this gentleman——

HERBERT [*bowing*].

My friend, this long time since,——

ANNE.

Marry, your friend?

THE PLAYER [*regarding* HERBERT *searchingly*].

This long time since.

ANNE.

Nay, is it so, indeed?
[*To* HERBERT.] My day's fulfilled of blun-
ders! O sweet sir,
How can I tell you? But I'll tell you all
If you'll but bear me escort from this place

Where none of us belongs. Yours is the first
Familiar face I've seen this afternoon!

HERBERT [*apart*].

A sweet assurance.
[*Aloud.*] But you seek . . . you need
Some rest—some cheer, some—Will you step within? [*Indicating tap-room.*]
The tavern is deserted, but——

ANNE. Not here!

I've been here quite an hour. Come, city-wards,
To Whitehall! I have had enough of bears
To quench my longing till next Whitsuntide.
Down to the river, pray you.

HERBERT. Sooth, at once?

ANNE.

At once, at once.
[*To* THE PLAYER.] I crave your pardon, sir,
For sundering your friendships. I've heard say
A woman always comes between two men
To their confusion. You shall drink amends
Some other day. I must be safely home.

THE PLAYER [*reassured by* HERBERT'S *reluctance to go.*]

It joys me that your trials have found an end;
And for the rest, I wish you prosperous voyage;
Which needs not, with such halcyon weather toward.

HERBERT [*apart*].

It cuts: and yet he knows not. Can it pass?
To him.] Let us meet soon. I have—I know not what

To say—nay, no import; but chance has parted
Our several ways too long. To leave you thus,
Without a word——

ANNE. You are in haste, my lord!
By the true faith, here are two friends indeed!
Two lovers crossed: and I,—'tis I that bar them.
Pray tarry, sir. I doubt not I may light
Upon some link-boy to attend me home
Or else a drunken prentice with a club,
Or that patched keeper strolling from the Garden
With all his dogs along; or failing them,
A pony with a monkey on his back,
Or, failing that, a bear! Some escort, sure,
Such as the Borough offers! I shall look
Part of a pageant from the Lady Fair,
And boast for three full moons, "Such sights I saw!"
Truly, 'tis new to me: but I doubt not
I shall trick out a mind for strange adventure,
As high as—Mistress Fytton!

HERBERT. Say no more,
Dear lady! I entreat you pardon me
The lameness of my wit. I'm stark adream;
You lighted here so suddenly, unlooked for
Vision in Bankside. . . . Let me hasten you,
Now that I see I dream not. It grows late.

ANNE.
And can you grant me such a length of time?

HERBERT.

Length? Say Illusion! Time? Alas, 'twill be
Only a poor half-hour [*loudly*], a poor half-hour!

[*Apart.*] Did she hear that, I wonder?

THE PLAYER [*bowing over* ANNE'S *hand*]. Not so, madam;
A little gold of largess, fallen to me
By chance.

HERBERT [*to him*].

A word with you——

[*Apart.*] O, I am gagged!

ANNE [*to* THE PLAYER].

You go with us, sir?

[*He moves towards door with them.*]

THE PLAYER. No, I do but play
Your inn-keeper.

HERBERT [*apart, despairingly*].

The eagle is gone blind.

[*Exeunt, leaving doors open. They are seen to go down the walk together. At the street they pause,* THE PLAYER, *bowing slowly, then turning back towards the inn;* ANNE *holding* HERBERT'S *arm. Within, the door on the left opens slightly, then* MARY *appears.*]

MARY.

'Tis true. My ears caught silence, if no more.
They're gone. . . .

[*She comes out of her hiding-place and opens the left-hand casement to see* ANNE *disappearing with Herbert.*]

She takes him with her! He'll return?
Gone, gone, without a word; and I was caged,—
And deaf as well. O, spite of everything!
She's so unlike. . . . How long shall I be here
To wait and wonder? He with her—with her!
[THE PLAYER, *having come slowly back to the door, hears her voice.* MARY *darts towards the entrance to look after* HERBERT *and* ANNE. *She sees him and recoils. She falls back step by step, while he stands holding the door-posts with his hands, impassive.*]
You! . . .

THE PLAYER

Yes. . . . [*After a pause.*] And you.

MARY. Do you not ask me why I'm here?

THE PLAYER.

I am not wont to shun the truth:
But yet I think the reason you could give
Were too uncomely.

MARY. Nay;—

THE PLAYER. If it were truth;
If it were truth! Although that likelihood
Scarce threatens.

MARY. So. Condemned without a trial.

THE PLAYER.

O, speak the lie now. Let there be no chance
For my unsightly love, bound head and foot,
Stark, full of wounds and horrible,—to find

Escape from out its charnel-house; to rise
Unwelcome before eyes that had forgot,
And say it died not truly. It should die.
Play no imposture: leave it,—it is dead.
I have been weak in that I tried to pour
The wine through plague-struck veins. It came to life
Over and over, drew sharp breath again
In torture such as't may be to be born,
If a poor babe could tell. Over and over,
I tell you, it has suffered resurrection,
Cheating its pain with hope, only to die
Over and over;—die more deaths than men
The meanest, most forlorn, are made to die
By tyranny or nature. . . . Now I see all
Clear. And I say, it shall not rise again.
I am as safe from you as I were dead.
I know you.

MARY. Herbert——

THE PLAYER. Do not touch his name.
Leave that; I saw.

MARY. You saw? Nay, what?

THE PLAYER. . . . . The whole
Clear story. Not at first. While you were hid,
I took some comfort, drop by drop, and minute
By minute. (Dullard!) Yet there was a maze
Of circumstances that showed even then to me
Perplext and strange. You here unravel it.
All's clear: you are the clue. [*Turning away.*]

MARY [*going to the casement*].

[*Apart.*] Caged, caged!
Does he know all? Why were those walls so dense?
[*To him.*] Nan Hughes hath seized the time to tune your mind
To some light gossip. Say how came she here?

THE PLAYER.

All emulation, thinking to match you
In high adventure:—liked it not, poor lady!
And is gone home, attended.

[*Reënter* DICKON.]

DICKON [*to* MARY] They be lost!—
Thy mask and muffler;—'tis no help to search.
Some hooker would 'a' swallowed 'em, be sure,
As the whale swallows Jonas, in the show.

MARY.

'Tis nought: I care not.

DICKON [*looking at the fire*].

Hey, it wants a log.

[*While he mends the fire, humming,* THE PLAYER *stands taking thought.* MARY *speaks apart, going to casement again to look out.*]

MARY [*apart*].

I will have what he knows. To cast me off:—
Not thus, not thus. Peace, I can blind him yet,
Or he'll despise me. Nay, I will not be
Thrust out at door like this. I will not go
But by mine own free will. There is no power

Can say what he might do to ruin us,
To win Will Herbert from me,—almost mine,
And I all his, all his—O April-Days!——
Well, friendship against love? I know who wins.
He is grown dread. . . . But yet he is a man.
[*Exit* DICKON *into tap-room.*]
[*To* THE PLAYER, *suavely.*] Well, headsman?
[*He does not turn.*]
Mind your office: I am judged.
Guilty, was it not so? . . . What is to do,
Do quickly. . . . Do you wait for some reprieve?
Guilty, you said. Nay, do you turn your face
To give me some small leeway of escape?
And yet, I will not go. . . .
[*Coming down slowly.*]
Well, headsman? . . .
You ask not why I came here, Clouded Brow,
Will you not ask me why I stay? No word?
O blind, come lead the blind! For I, I too
Lack sight and every sense to linger here
And make me an intruder where I once
Was welcome, oh most welcome, as I dreamed.
Look on me, then. I do confess, I have
Too often preened my feathers in the sun
And thought to rule a little, by my wit.
I have been spendthrift with men's offerings
To use them like a nosegay,—tear apart,
Petal by petal, leaf by leaf, until
I found the heart all bare, the curious heart

I longed to see for once, and cast away.
And so, at first, with you. . . . Ah, now I think
You're wise. There's nought so fair, so . . . curious,
So precious-rare to find as honesty.
'Twas all a child's play then, a counting-off
Of petals. Now I know. . . . But ask me why
I come unheralded, and in a mist
Of circumstance and strangeness. Listen, love;
Well then, dead love, if you will have it so.
I have been cunning, cruel,—what you will:
And yet the days of late have seemed too long
Even for summer! Something called me here.
And so I flung my pride away and came,
A very woman for my foolishness,
To say once more,—to say . . .

THE PLAYER. Nay, I'll not ask.
What lacks? I need no more, you have done well.
'Tis rare. There is no man I ever saw
But you could school him. Women should be players.
You are sovran in the art: feigning and truth
Are so commingled in you. Sure, to you
Nature's a simpleton hath never seen
Her own face in the well. Is there aught else?
To ask of my poor calling?

MARY. I deserved it
In other days. Hear how I can be meek.

I am come back, a foot-worn runaway,
Like any braggart boy. Let me sit down
And take Love's horn-book in my hands again
And learn from the beginning;—by the rod,
If you will scourge me, love. Come, come, forgive.
I am not wont to sue: and yet to-day
I am your suppliant, I am your servant,
Your link-boy, ay, your minstrel: ay,—wilt hear?
[*Takes up the lute, and gives a last look out of the casement.*]
The tumult in the streets is all apart
With the discordant past. The hour that is
Shall be the only thing in all the world.
[*Apart.*] I will be safe. He'll not win Herbert from me!
[*Crossing to him.*]
Will you have music, good my lord?

THE PLAYER [*catching the lute from her.*] Not that.
Not that! By heaven, you shall not. . . .
Nevermore.

MARY.
So. . . . But you speak at last. You are, forsooth,
A man: and you shall use me as my due;—
A woman, not the wind about your ears;
A woman whom you loved.

THE PLAYER [*half-apart, still holding the lute*].
Why were you not
That beauty that you seemed? . . . But had you been,

'Tis true, you would have had no word for me,——
No looks of love!

MARY. The man reproaches me?

THE PLAYER.

Not I—not I. . . . Will Herbert, what am I
To lay this broken trust to you,—to you,
Young, free, and tempted: April on his way,
Whom all hands reach for, and this woman here
Had set her heart upon!

MARY. What fantasy!
Surely he must have been from town of late,
To see the gude-folks! And how fare they, sir?
Reverend yeoman, say, how thrive the sheep?
What did the harvest yield you?—Did you count
The cabbage heads? and find how like . . . nay, nay!
But our gude-wife, did she bid in the neighbours
To prove them that her husband was no myth?
Some Puritan preacher, nay, some journeyman
To make you sup the sweeter with long prayers?
This were a rare conversion, by my soul!
From sonnets unto sermons:—eminent!

THE PLAYER.

Oh, yes, your scorn bites truly: sermons next.
There is so much to say. But it must be learned,

And I require hard schooling, dream too much
On what I would men were,—but women most.
I need the cudgel of the task-master
To make me con the truth. Yes, blind, you called me,
And 'tis my shame I bandaged mine own eyes
And held them dark. Now, by the grace of God,
Or haply because the devil tries too far,
I tear the blindfold off, and I see all.
I see you as you are; and in your heart
The secret love sprung up for one I loved,
A reckless boy who has trodden on my soul—
But that's a thing apart, concerns not you.
I know that you will stake your heaven and earth
To fool me,—fool us both.

MARY [*with idle interest*].

Why were you not
So stern a long time since? You're not so wise
As I have heard them say.

THE PLAYER [*standing by the chimney*].

Wise? Oh, not I.
Who was so witless as to call me wise?
Sure he had never bade me a good-day
And seen me take the cheer. . . .
I was your fool
Too long. . . . I am no longer anything.
Speak: what are you?

MARY [*after a pause*].

The foolishest of women:

A heart that should have been adventurer
On the high seas; a seeker in new lands,
To dare all and to lose. But I was made
A woman.
Oh, you see!—could you see all.
What if I say . . . the truth is not so far,
[*Watching him.*]
Yet farther than you dream. If I confess. . . .
He charmed my fancy . . . for the moment,—ay,
The shine of his fortunes too, the very name
Of Pembroke? . . . Dear my judge,—ay, clouded brow
And darkened fortune, be not black to me!
I'd try for my escape; the window's wide,
No one forbids, and yet I stay—I stay.
. . . . . .
Oh, I was niggard, once, unkind—I know,
Untrusty: loved, unloved you, day by day:
A little and a little,—why, I knew not,
And more, and wondered why;—then not at all:
Drank up the dew from out your very heart,
Like the extortionate sun, to leave you parched
Till, with as little grace, I flung all back
In gusts of angry rain! I have been cruel.
But the spell works; yea, love, the spell, the spell
Fed by your fasting, by your subtlety
Past all men's knowledge. . . . There is something rare

About you that I long to flee and cannot:—
Some mastery . . . that's more my will than I.

[*She laughs softly. He listens, looking straight ahead, not at her, immobile, but suffering evidently. She watches his face and speaks with greater intensity. Here she crosses nearer and falls on her knees.*]

Ah, look: you shall believe, you shall believe.
Will you put by your Music? Was I that?
Your Music,—very Music? . . . Listen then,
Turn not so blank a face. Thou hast my love.
I'll tell thee so till thought itself shall tire
And fall a-dreaming like a weary child, . . .
Only to dream of you, and in its sleep
To murmur You. . . . Ah, look at me, love, lord. . . .
Whom queens would honour. Read these eyes you praised,
That pitied, once,—that sue for pity now.
But look! You shall not turn from me——

THE PLAYER. Eyes, eyes!——
The darkness hides so much.

MARY. He'll not believe. . . .
What can I do? What more,—what more, you . . . man?
I bruise my heart here, at an iron gate . . .

[*She regards him half gloomily without rising.*]

Yet there is one thing more. . . . You'll take me, now?——
My meaning. . . . You were right. For once I say it.

There is a glory of discovery [*ironically*]
To the black heart . . . because it may be known
But once,—but once. . . .
I wonder men will hide
Their motives all so close. If they could guess,—
It is so new to feel the open day
Look in on all one's hidings, at the end.
So. . . . You were right. The first was all a lie:
A lie, and for a purpose. . . .
Now,—[*she rises and stands off, regarding him abruptly*],
And why, I know not,—but 'tis true, at last,
I do believe . . . I love you.
Look at me!

[*He stands by the fireside against the chimney-piece. She crosses to him with passionate appeal, holding out her arms. He turns his eyes and looks at her with a rigid scrutiny. She endures it for a second, then wavers; makes an effort, unable to look away, to lift her arms towards his neck; they falter and fall at her side. The two stand spellbound by mutual recognition. Then she speaks in a low voice.*]

MARY.

Oh, let me go!

[*She turns her head with an effort,—gathers her cloak about her, then hastens out as if from some terror.*]

[THE PLAYER *is alone beside the chimney-piece. The street outside is darkening with twilight through the casements and upper door. There is a sound of rough-throated singing that comes by and is softened with distance. It breaks the spell.*]

THE PLAYER.

So; it is over . . . now. [*He looks into the fire.*]

. . . . . .

"Fair, kind, and true." And true! . . . My golden Friend.

Those two . . . together. . . . He was ill at ease.

But that he should betray me with a kiss!

. . . . . .

By this preposterous world. . . . I am in need.

Shall there be no faith left? Nothing but names?

Then he's a fool who steers his life by such.

Why not the body-comfort of this herd

Of creatures huddled here to keep them warm?—

Trying to drown out with enforcèd laughter

The query of the winds . . . unanswered winds

That vex the soul with a perpetual doubt.

What holds me? . . . Bah, that were a Cause, indeed!

To prove your soul one truth, by being it,—

Against the foul dishonour of the world!

How else prove aught? . . .
I talk into the air.
And at my feet, my honour full of wounds
Honour? Whose honour? For I knew my sin,
And she . . . had none. There's nothing to avenge.
[*He speaks with more and more passion, too distraught to notice interruptions. Enter* DICKON, *with a tallow-dip. He regards* THE PLAYER *with half-open mouth from the corner; then stands by the casement, leaning up against it and yawning now and then.*]
I had no right: that I could call her mine
So none should steal her from me, and die for't.
There's nothing to avenge . . . Brave beggary!
How fit to lodge me in this home of Shows,
With all the ruffian life, the empty mirth,
The gross imposture of humanity,
Strutting in virtues it knows not to wear,
Knave in a stolen garment—all the same—
Until it grows enamoured of a life
It was not born to,—falls a-dream, poor cheat,
In the midst of its native shams,—the thieves and bears
And ballad-mongers all! . . . Of such am I.
[*Reënter* TOBIAS *and one or two* TAVERNERS. TOBIAS *regards* THE PLAYER, *who does not notice anyone,—then leads off* DICKON

by the ear. Exeunt into taproom. THE PLAYER *goes to the casement, pushes it wide open, and gazes out at the sky.*]

Is there naught else? . . . I could make shift to bind
My heart up and put on my mail again,
To cheat myself and death with one fight more,
If I could think there were some worldly use for bitter wisdom.
But I'm no general,
That my own hand-to-hand with evil days
Should cheer my doubting thousands . . .
I'm no more
Than one man lost among a multitude;
And in the end dust swallows them—and me,
And the good sweat that won our victories.
Who sees? Or seeing, cares? Who follows on?
Then why should my dishonour trouble me,
Or broken faith in him? *What is it suffers?*
And why? Now that the moon is turned to blood.

[*He turns towards the door with involuntary longing, and seems to listen.*]

No . . . no, he will not come. Well, I have naught
To do but pluck from me my bitter heart,
And live without it.

[*Reënter* DICKON *with a tankard and a cup. He sets them down on a small table; this he pushes towards* THE PLAYER, *who turns at the noise.*]

So . . . ? Is it for me?

DICKON.

Ay, on the score! I had good sight o' the bear.
Look, here's a sprig was stuck on him with pitch;—

[*Rubbing the sprig on his sleeve.*]

I caught it up,—from Lambeth marsh, belike.
Such grow there, and I've seen thee cherish such.

THE PLAYER.

Give us thy posy.

[*He comes back to the fire and sits in the chair near by.* DICKON *gets out the iron lantern from the corner.*]

DICKON. Hey! It wants a light.

[THE PLAYER *seems to listen once more, his face turned towards the door. He lifts his hand as if to hush* DICKON, *lets it fall, and looks back at the fire.* DICKON *regards him with shy curiosity and draws nearer.*]

DICKON.

Thou wilt be always minding of the fire. . . .
Wilt thou not?

THE PLAYER. Ay.

DICKON. It likes me, too.

THE PLAYER. So?

DICKON. Ay. . . .
I would I knew what thou art thinking on
When thou dost mind the fire. . . .

THE PLAYER. Wouldst thou?

DICKON. Ay.

[*Sound of footsteps outside. A group approaches the door.*]

Oh, here he is, come back!

THE PLAYER [*rising with passionate eagerness*].
Brave lad—brave lad!

DICKON [*singing*].
Hang out your lanthorns, trim your lights
To save your days from knavish nights!
[*He plunges, with his lantern, through the doorway, stumbling against* WAT BURROW, *who enters, a sorry figure, the worse for wear.*]

WAT [*sourly*].
Be the times soft, that you must try to cleave
Way through my ribs as tho' I was the moon?—
And you the man-wi-'the-lanthorn, or his dog?—
You bean! . . .
[*Exit* DICKON. WAT *shambles in and sees* THE PLAYER.
What, you, sir, here?

THE PLAYER.
Ay, here, good WAT.
[*While* WAT *crosses to the table and gets himself a chair,* THE PLAYER *looks at him as if with a new consciousness of the surroundings. After a time he sits as before. Re-enter* DICKON *and curls up on the floor, at his feet.*]

WAT.
O give me comfort, sir. This cursèd day,—
A wry, damned . . . noisome. . . .
Ay, poor Nick, poor Nick!
He's all to mend—poor Nick! He's sorely maimed,
More than we'd baited him with forty dogs.

'Od's body! Said I not, sir, he would fight?
Never before had he, in leading-chain,
Walked out to take the air and show his parts. . . .
'Went to his noddle like some greenest gull's
That's new come up to town. . . . The prentices
Squeaking along like Bedlam, he breaks loose
And prances me a hey,—I dancing counter!
Then such a cawing 'mongst the women! Next,
The chain did clatter and enrage him more;—
You would 'a' sworn a bear grew on each link,
And after each a prentice with a cudgel,—
Leaving him scarce an eye! So, howling all,
We run a pretty pace . . . and Nick, poor Nick,
He catches on a useless, stumbling fry
That needed not be born,—and bites into him.
And then . . . the Constable . . . And now, no show!

THE PLAYER.

Poor Wat! . . . Thou wentest scattering misadventure
Like comfits from thy horn of plenty, Wat.

WAT.

Ay, thank your worship. You be best to comfort.

[*He pours a mug of ale.*]

No show to-morrow! Minnow Constable. . . .
I'm a jack-rabbit strung up by my heels
For every knave to pinch as he goes by!

Alas, poor Nick, bear Nick . . . oh, think on Nick.

THE PLAYER.

With all his fortunes darkened for a day,—
And the eye o' his reason, sweet intelligencer,
Under a beggarly patch. . . . I pledge thee, Nick.

WAT.

Oh, you have seen hard times, sir, with us all.
Your eyes lack luster, too, this day. What say you?
No jesting. . . . What? I've heard of marvels there
In the New Country. There would be a knop-hole
For thee and me. There be few Constables
And such unhallowed fry. . . . An thou wouldst lay
Thy wit to mine—what is't we could not do?
Wilt turn't about?
[*Leans towards him in cordial confidence.*]
Nay, you there, sirrah boy,
Leave us together; as 'tis said in the play,
'Come, leave us, Boy!'

[DICKON *does not move. He gives a sigh and leans his head against* THE PLAYER'S *knee, his arms around his legs. He sleeps.* THE PLAYER *gazes sternly into the fire, while* WAT *rambles on, growing drowsy.*]

WAT.

The cub there snores good counsel. When all's done,

What a bubble is ambition! . . . When all's done. . . .
What's yet to do? . . . Why, sleep. . . .
Yet even now
I was on fire to see myself and you
Off for the Colony with Raleigh's men.
I've been beholden to 'ee. . . . Why, for thee
I could make shift to suffer plays o' Thursday.
Thou'rt the best man among them, o' my word.
There's other trades and crafts and qualities
Could serve . . . an thou wouldst lay thy wit to mine.
Us two! . . . us two! . . .

THE PLAYER [*apart, to the fire*].
"Fair, kind, and true." . . .

WAT. . . . Poor Nick!

[*He nods over his ale. There is muffled noise in the taproom. Someone opens the door a second, letting in a stave of a song, then slams the door shut.* THE PLAYER, *who has turned, gloomily starts to rise.* DICKON *moves in his sleep, sighs heavily, and settles his cheek against* THE PLAYER'S *shoes.* THE PLAYER *looks down for a moment. Then he sits again, looking now at the fire, now at the boy, whose hair he touches.*]

THE PLAYER.
So, heavy-head. You bid me think my thought
Twice over; keep me by, a heavy heart,

As ballast for thy dream. Well, I will
watch. . . .
Like slandered Providence. Nay, I'll not be
The prop to fail thy trust untenderly,
After a troubled day. . . .
Nay, rest you here.

[THE CURTAIN]

OVERTONES

BY

ALICE GERSTENBERG

"Overtones" was produced by the Washington Square Players under the direction of Edward Goodman at the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, beginning November 8, 1915, to represent an American one-act play on a bill of four comparative comedies, "Literature," by Arthur Schnitzler of Austria, "The Honourable Lover," by Roberto Bracco of Italy, and "Whims," by Alfred de Musset of France. In the cast were the following:

HETTY	*Josephine A. Meyer*
HARRIET, her overtone . .	*Agnes McCarthy*
MAGGIE	*Noël Haddon*
MARGARET, her overtone .	*Grace Griswold*

The scene was designed by Lee Simonson and the costumes and draperies by Bertha Holley.

"Overtones" was subsequently presented in vaudeville by Martin Beck, beginning at the Palace Theatre, Chicago, February 28, 1916, with Helene Lackaye as star, with the following cast:

HARRIET, a cultured woman .	*Helene Lackaye*
HETTY, her primitive self . .	*Ursula Faucett*
MARGARET, a cultured woman .	*Francesca Rotoli*
MAGGIE, her primitive self . .	*Nellie Dent*

The scene was designed by Jerome Blum.

Next played in London by Lily Langtry. Published by Doubleday, Page & Co., in a volume of "Four Washington Square Plays."

*OVERTONES

CHARACTERS

HARRIET, *a cultured woman*
HETTY, *her primitive self*
MARGARET, *a cultured woman*
MAGGIE, *her primitive self*

TIME: *The present.*

SCENE: HARRIET'S *fashionable living-room. The door at the back leads to the hall. In the centre a tea table with a high-backed chair at each side.*

HARRIET'S *gown is a light, "jealous" green. Her counterpart,* HETTY, *wears a gown of the same design but in a darker shade. Margaret wears a gown of lavender chiffon while her counterpart, Maggie, wears a gown of the same design in purple, a purple scarf veiling her face. Chiffon is used to give a sheer effect, suggesting a possibility of primitive and cultured selves merging into one woman. The primitive and cultured selves never come into actual physical contact but try to sustain the impression of mental conflict. Harriet never sees Hetty, never talks to her but rather thinks aloud looking into space. Hetty,*

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however, looks at Harriet, talks intently and shadows her continually. The same is true of Margaret and Maggie. The voices of the cultured women are affected and lingering, the voices of the primitive, impulsive and more or less staccato.

When the curtain rises HARRIET *is seated right of tea table, busying herself with the tea things.*

HETTY.

Harriet. [*There is no answer.*] Harriet, my other self. [*There is no answer.*] My trained self.

HARRIET.

[*Listens intently*] Yes?

[*From behind Harriet's chair Hetty rises slowly.*]

HETTY.

I want to talk to you.

HARRIET.

Well?

HETTY.

[*Looking at Harriet admiringly*] Oh, Harriet, you are beautiful to-day

HARRIET.

Am I presentable, Hetty?

HETTY.

Suits me.

HARRIET.

I've tried to make the best of the good points.

HETTY.

My passions are deeper than yours. I can't keep on the mask as you do. I'm crude and real, you are my appearance in the world.

HARRIET.

I am what you wish the world to believe you are.

HETTY.

You are the part of me that has been trained.

HARRIET.

I am your educated self.

HETTY.

I am the rushing river; you are the ice over the current.

HARRIET.

I am your subtle overtones.

HETTY.

But together we are one woman, the wife of Charles Goodrich.

HARRIET.

There I disagree with you, Hetty, I alone am his wife.

HETTY.

[*Indignantly*] Harriet, how can you say such a thing?

HARRIET.

Certainly. I am the one who flatters him. I have to be the one who talks to him. If I gave you a chance you would tell him at once that you dislike him.

HETTY.

[*Moving away*] I don't love him, that's certain.

HARRIET.

You leave all the fibbing to me. He doesn't suspect that my calm, suave manner hides your hatred. Considering the amount of scheming it causes me it can safely be said that he is my husband.

HETTY.

Oh, if you love him——

HARRIET.

I? I haven't any feelings. It isn't my business to love anybody.

HETTY.

Then why need you object to calling him my husband?

HARRIET.

I resent your appropriation of a man who is managed only through the cleverness of my artifice.

HETTY.

You may be clever enough to deceive him, Harriet, but I am still the one who suffers. I can't forget he is my husband. I can't forget that I might have married John Caldwell.

HARRIET.

How foolish of you to remember John, just because we met his wife by chance.

HETTY.

That's what I want to talk to you about. She may be here at any moment. I want to advise you about what to say to her this afternoon.

HARRIET.

By all means tell me now and don't interrupt while she is here. You have a most annoying habit of talking to me when people are present. Sometimes it is all I can do to keep my poise and appear *not* to be listening to you.

HETTY.

Impress her.

HARRIET.

Hetty, dear, is it not my custom to impress people?

HETTY.

I hate her.

HARRIET.

I can't let her see that.

HETTY.

I hate her because she married John.

HARRIET.

Only after you had refused him.

HETTY.

[*Turning to* HARRIET] Was it my fault that I refused him?

HARRIET.

That's right, blame me.

HETTY.

It was your fault. You told me he was too poor and never would be able to do anything in painting. Look at him now, known in Europe, just returned from eight years in Paris, famous.

HARRIET.

It was too poor a gamble at the time. It was much safer to accept Charles's money and position.

HETTY.

And then John married Margaret within the year.

HARRIET.

Out of spite.

HETTY.

Freckled, gauky-looking thing she was, too.

HARRIET.

[*A little sadly*] Europe improved her. She was stunning the other morning.

HETTY.

Make her jealous to-day.

HARRIET.

Shall I be haughty or cordial or caustic or——

HETTY.

Above all else you must let her know that we are rich.

HARRIET.

Oh, yes, I do that quite easily now.

HETTY.

You must put it on a bit.

HARRIET.

Never fear.

HETTY.

Tell her I love my husband.

HARRIET.

My husband——

HETTY.

Are you going to quarrel with me?

HARRIET.

[*Moves away*] No, I have no desire to quarrel with you. It is quite too uncomfortable. I couldn't get away from you if I tried.

HETTY.

[*Stamping her foot and following* HARRIET] You were a stupid fool to make me refuse John, I'll never forgive you—never——

HARRIET.

[*Stopping and holding up her hand*] Don't get me all excited. I'll be in no condition to meet her properly this afternoon.

HETTY.

[*Passionately*] I could choke you for robbing me of John.

HARRIET.

[*Retreating*] Don't muss me!

HETTY.

You don't know how you have made me suffer.

HARRIET.

[*Beginning to feel the strength of Hetty's emotion surge through her and trying to conquer it*] It is not my business to have heartaches.

HETTY.

You're bloodless. Nothing but sham—sham—while I——

HARRIET.

[*Emotionally*] Be quiet! I can't let her see that I have been fighting with my inner self.

HETTY.

And now after all my suffering you say it has cost you more than it has cost me to be married to Charles. But it's the pain here in my heart—I've paid the price—I've paid—Charles is not your husband!

HARRIET.

[*Trying to conquer emotion*] He is.

HETTY.

[*Follows Harriet*] He isn't.

HARRIET.

[*Weakly*] He is.

HETTY.

[*Towering over Harriet*] He isn't! I'll kill you!

HARRIET.

[*Overpowered, sinks into a chair*] Don't—don't—you're stronger than I—you're——

HETTY.

Say he's mine.

HARRIET.

He's ours.

HETTY.

[*The telephone rings*] There she is now.

[*Hetty hurries to 'phone but* HARRIET *regains her supremacy.*]

HARRIET.

[*Authoritatively*] Wait! I can't let the telephone girl down there hear my real self. It isn't proper. [*At 'phone*] Show Mrs. Caldwell up.

HETTY.

I'm so excited my heart's in my mouth.

HARRIET.

[*At the mirror*] A nice state you've put my nerves into.

HETTY.

Don't let her see you're nervous.

HARRIET*.

Quick, put the veil on, or she'll see *you* shining through me.

[HARRIET *takes a scarf of chiffon that has been lying over the back of a chair and drapes it on* HETTY, *covering her face. The chiffon is the same colour of their gowns but paler in shade so that it pales* HETTY'S *darker gown*

*The vaudeville production did not use Harriet's line about the veil because at the rise of the curtain Hetty is already veiled in chiffon the same dark green shade as her gown.

to match HARRIET'S *lighter one. As* HETTY *moves in the following scene the chiffon falls away revealing now and then the gown of deeper dye underneath.*]

HETTY.

Tell her Charles is rich and fascinating—boast of our friends, make her feel she needs us.

HARRIET.

I'll make her ask John to paint us.

HETTY.

That's just my thought—if John paints our portrait——

HARRIET.

We can wear an exquisite gown——

HETTY.

And make him fall in love again and——

HARRIET.

[*Schemingly*] Yes.

[MARGARET *parts her portières back centre and extends her hand.* MARGARET *is followed by her counterpart* MAGGIE.]

Oh, Margaret, I'm so glad to see you!

HETTY.

[*To Maggie*] That's a lie.

MARGARET.

[*In superficial voice throughout*] It's enchanting to see you, Harriet.

MAGGIE.

[*In emotional voice throughout*] I'd bite you, if I dared.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] Wasn't our meeting a stroke of luck?

MAGARET.

[*Coming down left of table*] I've thought of you so often, Harriet; and to come back and find you living in New York.

HARRIET.

[*Coming down right of table*] Mr. Goodrich has many interests here.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Flatter her.

MARGARET.

I know, Mr. Goodrich is so successful.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Tell her we're rich.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] Won't you sit down?

MARGARET.

[*Takes a chair*] What a beautiful cabinet!*

HARRIET.

Do you like it? I'm afraid Charles paid an extravagant price.

MAGGIE.

[*To* HETTY] I don't believe it.

MARGARET.

[*Sitting down. To* HARRIET] I am sure he must have.

HARRIET.

[*Sitting down*] How well you are looking, Margaret.

HETTY.

Yes, you are not. There are circles under your eyes.

*What beautiful lamps! (In vaudeville production.)

MAGGIE.

[*To Hetty*] I haven't eaten since breakfast and I'm hungry.

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] How well you are looking, too.

MAGGIE.

[*To* HETTY] You have hard lines about your lips, are you happy?

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Don't let her know that I'm unhappy.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] Why shouldn't I look well? My life is full, happy, complete——

MAGGIE.

I wonder.

HETTY.

[*In* HARRIET'S *ear*] Tell her we have an automobile.

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] My life is complete too.

MAGGIE.

My heart is torn with sorrow; my husband cannot make a living. He will kill himself if he does not get an order for a painting.

MARGARET.

[*Laughs*] You must come and see us in our studio. John has been doing some excellent portraits. He cannot begin to fill his orders.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Tell her we have an automobile.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] Do you take lemon in your tea?

MAGGIE.

Take cream. It's more filling.

MARGARET.

[*Looking nonchalantly at tea things*] No, cream, if you please. How cozy!

MAGGIE.

[*Glaring at tea things*] Only cakes! I could eat them all! !

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] How many lumps?

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Sugar is nourishing.

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] Three, please. I used to drink very sweet coffee in Turkey and ever since I've——

HETTY.

I don't believe you were ever in Turkey.

MAGGIE.

I wasn't, but it is none of your business.

HARRIET.

[*Pouring tea*] Have you been in Turkey, do tell me about it.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Change the subject.

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] You must go there. You have so much taste in dress you would enjoy seeing their costumes.

MAGGIE.

Isn't she going to pass the cake?

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] John painted several portraits there.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Why don't you stop her bragging and tell her we have an automobile?

HARRIET.

[*Offers cake across the table to Margaret.*] Cake?

MAGGIE.

[*Stands back of Margaret, shadowing her as* HETTY *shadows* HARRIET. MAGGIE *reaches claws out for the cake and groans with joy.*] At last! [*But her claws do not touch the cake.*]

MARGARET.

[*With a graceful, nonchalant hand places cake upon her plate and bites at it slowly and delicately*] Thank you.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Automobile!

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Follow up the costumes with the suggestion that she would make a good model for John. It isn't too early to begin getting what you came for.

MARGARET.

[*Ignoring* MAGGIE] What delicious cake.

HETTY.

[*Excitedly to* HARRIET] There's your chance for the auto.

HARRIET.

[*Nonchalantly to* MARGARET] Yes, it is good cake, isn't it? There are always a great many

Photo. Underwood & Underwood

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people buying it at Harper's. I sat in my automobile fifteen minutes this morning waiting for my chauffeur to get it.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Make her order a portrait.

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] If you stopped at Harper's you must have noticed the new gowns at Henderson's Aren't the shop windows alluring these days?

HARRIET.

Even my chauffeur notices them.

MAGGIE.

I know you have an automobile, I heard you the first time.

MARGARET.

I notice gowns now with an artist's eye as John does. The one you have on, my dear, is very paintable.

HETTY.

Don't let her see you're anxious to be painted.

HARRIET.

[*Nonchalantly*] Oh, it's just a little model.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Don't seem anxious to get the order.

MARGARET.

[*Nonchalantly*] Perhaps it isn't the gown itself but the way you wear it that pleases the eye. Some people can wear anything with grace.

HETTY.

Yes, I'm very graceful.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] You flatter me, my dear.

MARGARET.

On the contrary, Harriet, I have an intense admiration for you. I remember how beautiful you were—as a girl. In fact, I was quite jealous when John was paying you so much attention.

HETTY.

She is gloating because I lost him.

HARRIET.

Those were childhood days in a country town.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] She's trying to make you feel that John was only a country boy.

MARGARET.

Most great men have come from the country. There is a fair chance that John will be added to the list.

HETTY.

I know it and I am bitterly jealous of you.

HARRIET.

Undoubtedly he owes much of his success to you, Margaret, your experience in economy and your ability to endure hardship. Those first few years in Paris must have been a struggle.

MAGGIE.

She is sneering at your poverty.

MARGARET.

Yes, we did find life difficult at first, not the luxurious start a girl has who marries wealth.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET]. Deny that you married Charles for his money.

[HARRIET *deems it wise to ignore* HETTY'S *advice.*]

MARGARET.

But John and I are so congenial in our tastes, that we were impervious to hardship or unhappiness.

HETTY.

[*In anguish*] Do you love each other? Is it really true?

HARRIET.

[*Sweetly*] Did you have all the romance of starving for his art?

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] She's taunting you. Get even with her.

MARGARET.

Not for long. Prince Rier soon discovered John's genius, and introduced him royally to wealthy Parisians who gave him many orders.

HETTY.

[*To* MAGGIE] Are you telling the truth or are you lying?

HARRIET.

If he had so many opportunities there, you must have had great inducements to come back to the States.

MAGGIE.

[*To* HETTY] We did, but not the kind you think.

MARGARET.

John became the rage among Americans travelling in France, too, and they simply insisted upon his coming here.

HARRIET.

Whom is he going to paint here?

MARGARET.

[*Frightened*] What names dare I make up?

MARGARET.

[*Calmly*] Just at present Miss Dorothy Ainsworth of Oregon is posing. You may not know the name, but she is the daughter of a wealthy miner who found gold in Alaska.

HARRIET.

I dare say there are many Western people we have never heard of.

MARGARET.

You must have found social life in New York very interesting, Harriet, after the simplicity of our home town.

HETTY.

[*To* MAGGIE] There's no need to remind us that our beginnings were the same.

HARRIET.

Of course Charles's family made everything delightful for me. They are so well connected.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Flatter her.

MARGARET.

I heard it mentioned yesterday that you had made yourself very popular. Someone said you were very clever!

HARRIET.

[*Pleased*] Who told you that?

MAGGIE.

Nobody!

MARGARET.

[*Pleasantly*] Oh, confidences should be sus-

pected—respected, I mean. They said, too, that you are gaining some reputation as a critic of art.

HARRIET.

I make no pretenses.

MARGARET.

Are you and Mr. Goodrich interested in the same things, too?

HETTY.

No!

HARRIET.

Yes, indeed, Charles and I are inseparable.

MAGGIE.

I wonder.

HARRIET.

Do have another cake.

MAGGIE.

[*In relief*] Oh, yes.

[*Again her claws extend but do not touch the cake.*]

MARGARET.

[*Takes cake delicately*] I really shouldn't—after my big luncheon. John took me to the Ritz and we are invited to the Bedfords' for dinner—they have such a magnificent house near the drive—I really shouldn't, but the cakes are so good.

MAGGIE.

Starving!

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] More tea?

MAGGIE.

Yes!

MARGARET.

No, thank you. How wonderfully life has arranged itself for you. Wealth, position, a happy marriage, every opportunity to enjoy all pleasures; beauty, art—how happy you must be.

HETTY.

[*In anguish*] Don't call me happy. I've never been happy since I gave up John. All these years without him—a future without him—no—no—I shall win him back—away from you—away from you——

HARRIET.

[*Does not see* MAGGIE *pointing to cream and* MARGARET *stealing some*] I sometimes think it is unfair for any one to be as happy as I am. Charles and I are just as much in love now as when we married. To me he is just the dearest man in the world.

MAGGIE.

[*Passionately*] My John is. I love him so much I could die for him. I'm going through hunger and want to make him great and he loves me. He worships me!

MARGARET.

[*Leisurely to* HARRIET] I should like to meet Mr. Goodrich. Bring him to our studio. John has some sketches to show. Not many, because all the portraits have been purchased by the subjects. He gets as much as four thousand dollars now.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Don't pay that much.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] As much as that?

MARGARET.

It is not really too much when one considers that John is in the foremost rank of artists to-day. A picture painted by him now will double and treble in value.

MAGGIE.

It's a lie. He is growing weak with despair.

HARRIET.

Does he paint all day long?

MAGGIE.

No, he draws advertisements for our bread.

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] When you and your husband come to see us. telephone first——

MAGGIE.

Yes, so he can get the advertisements out of the way.

MARGARET.

Otherwise you might arrive while he has a sitter, and John refuses to let me disturb him then.

HETTY.

Make her ask for an order.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] Le Grange offered to paint me for a thousand.

MARGARET.

Louis Le Grange's reputation isn't worth more than that.

HARRIET.

Well, I've heard his work well mentioned.

MAGGIE.

Yes, he is doing splendid work.

MARGARET.

Oh, dear me, no. He is only praised by the masses. He is accepted not at all by artists themselves.

HETTY.

[*Anxiously*] Must I really pay the full price?

HARRIET.

Le Grange thought I would make a good subject.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Let her fish for it.

MARGARET.

Of course you would. Why don't you let Le Grange paint you, if you *trust* him?

HETTY.

She doesn't seem anxious to have John do it.

HARRIET.

But if Le Grange isn't accepted by artists, it would be a waste of time to pose for him, wouldn't it?

MARGARET.

Yes, I think it would.

MAGGIE.

[*Passionately to* HETTY *across back of table*] Give us the order. John is so despondent he can't endure much longer. Help us! Help me! Save us!

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Don't seem too eager.

HARRIET.

And yet if he charges only a thousand one might consider it.

MARGARET.

If you really wish to be painted, why don't you give a little more and have a portrait really worth while? John might be induced to do you for a little below his usual price considering that you used to be such good friends.

HETTY.

[*In glee*] Hurrah!

HARRIET.

[*Quietly to* MARGARET] That's very nice of you to suggest—of course I don't know——

MAGGIE.

[*In fear*] For God's sake, say yes.

MARGARET.

[*Quietly to* HARRIET] Of course, I don't know whether John would. He is very peculiar in these matters. He sets his value on his work and thinks it beneath him to discuss price.

HETTY.

[*To* MAGGIE] You needn't try to make us feel small.

MARGARET.

Still, I might quite delicately mention to him that inasmuch as you have many influential friends you would be very glad to—to——

MAGGIE.

[*To* HETTY] Finish what I don't want to say.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Help her out.

HARRIET.

Oh, yes, introductions will follow the exhibition of my portrait. No doubt I——

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Be patronizing.

HARRIET.

No doubt I shall be able to introduce your husband to his advantage.

MAGGIE.

[*Relieved*] Saved.

MARGARET.

If I find John in a propitious mood I shall take pleasure, for your sake, in telling him about your beauty. Just as you are sitting now would be a lovely pose.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] We can go now.

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] Don't let her think she is doing us a favour.

HARRIET.

It will give me pleasure to add my name to your husband's list of patronesses.

MAGGIE.

[*Excitedly to* MARGARET] Run home and tell John the good news.

MARGARET.

[*Leisurely to* HARRIET] I little guessed when I came for a pleasant chat about old times that it would develop into business arrangements. I had no idea, Harriet, that you had any intention of being painted. By Le Grange, too. Well, I came just in time to rescue you.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] Run home and tell John. Hurry, hurry!

HETTY.

[*To* HARRIET] You managed the order very neatly. She doesn't suspect that you wanted it.

HARRIET.

Now if I am not satisfied with my portrait, I shall blame you, Margaret, dear. I am relying upon your opinion of John's talent.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] She doesn't suspect what you came for. Run home and tell John!

HARRIET.

You always had a brilliant mind, Margaret.

MARGARET.

Ah, it is you who flatter, now.

MAGGIE.

[*To* MARGARET] You don't have to stay so long. Hurry home!

HARRIET.

Ah, one does not flatter when one tells the truth.

MARGARET.

[*Smiles*] I must be going or you will have me completely under your spell.

HETTY.

[*Looks at clock*] Yes, do go. I have to dress for dinner.

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] Oh, don't hurry.

MAGGIE.

[*To* HETTY] I hate you!

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] No, really I must, but I hope we shall see each other often at the studio. I find you so stimulating.

HETTY.

[*To* MAGGIE] I hate you!

HARRIET.

[*To* MARGARET] It is indeed gratifying to find a kindred spirit.

MAGGIE.

[*To* HETTY] I came for your gold.

MARGARET.

[*To* HARRIET] How delightful it is to know you again.

HETTY.

[*To* MAGGIE] I am going to make you and your husband suffer.

HARRIET.

My kind regards to John.

MAGGIE.

[*To* HETTY] He has forgotten all about you.

MARGARET.

[*Rises*] He will be so happy to receive them.

HETTY.

[*To* MAGGIE] I can hardly wait to talk to him again.

HARRIET.

I shall wait, then, until you send me word?

MARGARET.

[*Offering her hand*] I'll speak to John about it as soon as I can and tell you when to come.

[HARRIET *takes* MARGARET'S *hand affectionately.*

HETTY *and* MAGGIE *rush at each other, throw back their veils, and fling their speeches fiercely at each other.*]

HETTY.

I love him—I love him——

MAGGIE.

He's starving—I'm starving——

HETTY.

I'm going to take him away from you——

MAGGIE.

I want your money—and your influence.

HETTY and MAGGIE.

I'm going to rob you—rob you.

[*There is a cymbal crash, the lights go out and come up again slowly, leaving only* MARGARET *and* HARRIET *visible.*]

MARGARET.

[*Quietly to* HARRIET] I've had such a delightful afternoon.

HARRIET.

[*Offering her hand*] If has been a joy to see you.

MARGARET.

[*Sweetly to* HARRIET] Good-bye.

HARRIET.

[*Sweetly to* MARGARET *as she kisses her*] Good-bye, my dear.

[THE CURTAIN]

SHAM

A SOCIAL SATIRE

BY

FRANK G. TOMPKINS

SHAM*

A Social Satire

THREE PEOPLE

CHARLES, *the householder.*
CLARA, *his wife.*
THE THIEF.

SCENE: A darkened room. After a moment the door opens, admitting a streak of light. A man peers in cautiously. As soon as he is sure that the room is unoccupied, he steps inside and feels along the wall until he finds the switch which floods the room with light. He is dressed in impeccable taste—evidently a man of culture. From time to time he bites appreciatively on a ham sandwich as he looks about him, apparently viewing the room for the first time. Nothing pleases him until a vase over the mantel

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catches his eye. He picks it up, looks at the bottom, puts it down hard, and mutters, "Imitation." Other articles receive the same disdainful verdict. The whole room is beneath his notice. He starts to sit down before the fire and enjoy his sandwich. Suddenly he pauses to listen, looks about him hurriedly for some place to hide, thinks better of it, and takes his stand opposite the door, smiling pleasantly and expectantly. The door opens and a young woman enters with a man at her heels. As she sees the thief she stifles a scream and retreats, backing the man out behind her. The thief smiles and waits. Soon the door opens again, and the man enters with the woman clinging to him. They stand opposite the thief and stare at him, not sure what they ought to say or do.

THIEF [*pleasantly*]. Good evening! [*Pause.*] Good evening, good evening. You surprised me. Can't say I expected you home so soon. Was the play an awful bore? [*Pause.*] We-e-ell, can't one of you speak? I CAN carry on a conversation alone, but the question-and-answer method is usually preferred. If one of you will ask me how I do, we might get a step farther.

CLARA [*breathlessly*]. You—you—— [*With growing conviction.*] You're a thief!

THIEF. Exactly. And you, madame? The mistress of the house, I presume. Or are you another thief? The traditional one that it takes to catch the first?

CLARA. This—this is OUR house. Charles,

why don't you do something? Don't stand there like a—Make him go away! Tell him he mustn't take anything. [*Advancing toward the thief and speaking all in one sentence.*] What have you taken? Give it to me instantly. How dare you! Charles, take it away from him.

CHARLES [*apparently not afraid, a little amused, but uncertain what to do, finally adopting the bullying tone.*] I say, old man, you'd better clear out. We've come home. You know you can't—Come now, give it up. Be sensible. I don't want to use force——

THIEF. I don't want you to.

CHARLES. If you've got anything of ours—We aren't helpless, you know. [*He starts to draw something black and shiny from his overcoat pocket. It might be a pistol, but he does not reveal its shape.*]

THIEF. Let's see those glasses. Give them here. [*Takes them from the uncertain* CHARLES.] Perhaps they're better than mine. Fine cases. [*Tries them.*] Humph! Window glass! Take them back. You're not armed, you know. I threw your revolver down the cold-air shaft. Never carry one myself—in business hours. Yours was in the bottom of your bureau drawer. Bad shape, those bureau drawers were in. Nice and neat on top; rat's nest below. Shows up your character in great shape, old man. Always tell your man by his bureau drawers. Didn't it ever occur to you that a thief might drop in on you some night? What would he think of you?

CHARLES. I don't think——

THIEF. You should. I said to myself when I opened that drawer: "They put up a great surface, but they're shams. Probably streak that runs through everything they do." You ought to begin with real neatness. This other sort of thing is just a form of dishonesty.

CLARA. You! Talking to US about honesty—in our house!

THIEF. Just the place for honesty. Begin at home. Let's——

CLARA. Charles, I won't stand this! Grab hold of him. Search him. You hold him. I'll telephone.

THIEF. You can't.

CLARA. You've cut the wires.

THIEF. Didn't have to. Your telephone service has been cut off by the company. I found that out before I came. I suspect you neglected the bill. You ought not to, makes no end of trouble. Inconvenienced me this evening. Better get it put in right away.

CLARA. Charles, do I have to stand here and be insulted?

THIEF. Sit down. Won't you, please! This is your last ham-sandwich, so I can't offer you any, but there's plenty of beer in the cellar, if you care for it. I don't recommend it, but perhaps you're used to it.

CLARA [*almost crying*]. Charles, are you going to let him preach to us all night? I won't have it. Being lectured by a thief!

CHARLES. You can't stop a man's talking, my

dear, especially this sort of man. Can't you see he's a born preacher? Old man, while advice is going round, let me tell you that you've missed your calling. Why don't you go in for reform? Ought to go big.

CLARA. Oh, Charles! Don't talk to him. You're a good deal bigger than he is.

THIEF. Maybe I'll jiu-jitsu him.

CLARA. He's insulting you now, Charles. Please try. I'll hold his feet.

THIEF. No doubt you would. But that wouldn't stop my talking. You'd be taking an unfair advantage, too; I couldn't kick a lady could I? Besides, there are two of you. You leave it to Charles and me. Let's have fair play, at least.

CLARA. Fair play? I'd like to know——

THIEF. Ple-e-ase, don't screech! My head aches and your voice pierces so. Let's sit down quietly and discuss the situation like well-bred people, and when we've come to some understanding, I'll go.

CLARA. Yes, after you've taken everything in the house and criticized everything else you can't take, our manners and our morals.

CHARLES. But he isn't taking anything now, is he? Let the poor chap criticize, can't you? I don't suppose he often meets his—er—customers socially. He's just dying for a good old visit. Lonesome profession, isn't it, old man?

CLARA. If you WON'T do anything, I'll call the neighbours.

THIEF. No neighbours to call. Nearest one a

block away, and he isn't at home. That comes of living in a fashionable suburb. Don't believe you can afford it either. WON'T you sit down, madame? I can't till you do. Well, then I shall have to stand, and I've been on my feet all day. It's hardly considerate [*plaintively*]. I don't talk so well on my feet, either. It will take me much longer this way. [*Clara bounces into a chair, meaningfully.*] Thank you, that's better [*sighs with relief as he sinks into the easy chair*]. I knew I could appeal to your better nature. Have a cigarette? [*Charles accepts one from his beautiful case.*] And you, Madame?

CLARA [*puts out her hand, but withdraws it quickly*]. Thank you, I don't care to smoke—with a thief.

THIEF. Right. Better not smoke, anyway. I'm so old-fashioned, I hate to see women smoke. None of the women in my family do it. Perhaps we're too conventional——

CLARA. I don't know that I care to be like the women of your family. I *will* have one, if you please. No doubt you get them from a man of taste.

THIEF. Your next-door neighbour. This is—was—his case. Exquisite taste. Seen this case often, I suppose? [*He eyes them closely.*] Great friends? Or perhaps you don't move in the same circles. [*Clara glares at him.*] Pardon me. Tactless of me, but how could I guess? Well, here's your chance to get acquainted with his cigarettes. Will you have one now?

CLARA. I don't receive stolen goods.

THIEF. That's a little hard on Charles, isn't it? He seems to be enjoying his.

CHARLES. Bully cigarette. Hempsted's a connoisseur. Truth is—we don't know the Hempsteds. They've never called.

THIEF. That's right, Charles. Tell the truth and shame [*with a jerk of his head toward Clara*]—you know who.

CLARA. Charles, there isn't any reason, I'm sure——

THIEF. Quietly, please. Remember my head. I'm sorry, but I must decline to discuss your social prospects with you, and also your neighbours' shortcomings, much as we should all enjoy it. There isn't time for that. Let's get down to business. The question we've got to decide and decide very quickly is, What would you like to have me take?

CLARA [*aghast*]. What would we—what would we like to have you take? Why—why—you can't take anything now; we're here. Of all the nerve! What would we like——

THIEF. It gains by repetition, doesn't it?

CHARLES. You've got me, old man. You'll have to come again. I may be slow, but I don't for the moment see the necessity for your taking anything.

THIEF. I was afraid of this. I'll have to begin farther back. Look here now, just suppose I go away and don't take anything [*with an air of triumph*]. How would you like that?

CHARLES. Suits me to a "T." How about you,

my dear? Think you can be firm and bear up under it?

THIEF. Don't be sarcastic. You're too big. Only women and little men should be sarcastic. Besides, it isn't fair to me, when I'm trying to help you. Here am I, trying to get you out of a mighty ticklish situation, and you go and get funny. It isn't right.

CHARLES. Beg pardon, old man. Try us in words of one syllable. You see this is a new situation for us. But we're anxious to learn.

THIEF. Listen, then. See if you can follow this. Now there's nothing in your house that I want; nothing that I could for a moment contemplate keeping without a good deal of pain to myself.

CLARA. We're trying to spare you. But if you care to know, we had the advice of Elsie de Wolfe.

THIEF [*wonderingly*]. Elsie de Wolfe? Elsie, how could you! Now, if you had asked me to guess I should have said—the Pullman Company. I shudder to think of owning any of this bric-à-brac myself. But it must be done. Here am I offering to burden myself with something I don't want, wouldn't keep for worlds, and couldn't sell. [*Growing a little oratorical.*] Why do I do this?

CHARLES. Yes, why do you?

CLARA. Hush, Charles; it's a rhetorical question; he wants to answer it himself.

THIEF. I do it to accommodate you. Must I be even plainer? Imagine that I go away, refusing to take anything in spite of your protests. Imagine it's to-morrow. The police and the reporters

have caught wind of the story. Something has been taken from every house in Sargent Road—except one. The nature of the articles shows that the thief is a man of rare discrimination. To be quite frank—a connoisseur.

CLARA. A connoisseur of what? Humph!

THIEF. And a connoisseur of such judgment that to have him pass your Rubens by is to cast doubt upon its authenticity. I do not exaggerate. Let me tell you that from the Hempsteds—[*Clara leans forward, all interest.*]—but that would take too long. [*She leans back.*] The public immediately asks, Why did the thief take nothing from 2819 Sargent Road? The answer is too obvious: There is nothing worth taking at 2819 Sargent Road.

CHARLES [*comprehendingly*]. Um-hu-m!

THIEF. The public laughs. Worse still, the neighbours laugh. What becomes of social pretensions after that? It's a serious thing, laughter is. It puts anybody's case out of court. And it's a serious thing to have a thief pass you by. People have been socially marooned for less than that. Have I made myself clear? Are you ready for the question? What would you like to have me take?

CHARLES. Now, old man, I say that's neat. Sure you aren't a lawyer?

THIEF. I have studied the law—but not from that side.

CLARA. It's all bosh. Why couldn't we claim we'd lost something very valuable, something we'd never had?

THIEF [*solemnly*]. That's the most shameless

proposal I've ever heard. Yes, you could *lie* about it. I can't conceal from you what I think of your moral standards.

CHARLES. I can't imagine you concealing anything unpleasant.

CLARA. It's no worse than——

THIEF. Your moral sense is blunted. But I can't attend to that now. Think of this: Suppose, as I said, I should take nothing and you should publish that bare-faced lie, and then I should get caught. Would I shield you? Never. Or suppose I shouldn't get caught. Has no one entered your house since you have been here? Doesn't your maid know what you have? Can you trust her not to talk? No, no, it isn't worth the risk. It isn't even common sense, to say nothing of the moral aspects of the case. Why do people never stop to think of the practical advantages of having things stolen! Endless possibilities! Why, a woman loses a $5 brooch and it's immediately worth $15. The longer it stays lost, the more diamonds it had in it, until she prays God every night that it won't be found. Look at the advertising she gets out of it. And does she learn anything from it? Never. Let a harmless thief appear in her room and she yells like a hyena instead of saying to him, like a sensible woman: "Hands up; I've got you right where I want you; take those imitation pearls off my dresser and get to hell out of here. If I ever see you or those pearls around here again, I'll hand you over to the police." That's what she ought to say. It's the chance of her life. But

unless she's an actress, she misses it absolutely. A thief doesn't expect gratitude, but it seems to me he might at least expect understanding and intelligent coöperation. Here are you facing disgrace, and here am I willing to save you. And what do I get? Sarcasm, cheap sarcasm!

CHARLES. I beg your pardon, old man. I'm truly sorry. You're just too advanced for us. Clara, there's an idea in it. What do you think?

CLARA. It has its possibilities. Now if he'll let me choose—— Isn't there a joker in it somewhere? Let me think. We might let you have something. What do you want?

THIEF [*indignantly*]. What do I want? I—don't want—anything. Can't you see that? The question is, What do you want me to have? And please be a little considerate. Don't ask me to take the pianola or the ice-box. Can't you make up your minds? Let me help you. Haven't you got some old wedding gifts? Everybody has. Regular white elephants, yet you don't dare get rid of them for fear the donors will come to see you and miss them. A discriminating thief is a godsend. All you have to do is write: "Dear Maude and Fred: Last night our house was broken into, and of course the first thing that was taken was that lovely Roycroft chair you gave us." Or choose what you like. Here's opportunity knocking at your door. Make it something ugly as you please, but something genuine. I hate sham.

CLARA. Charles, it's our chance. There's that lovely, hand-carved——

THIEF. Stop! I saw it [*shuddering*]. It has the marks of the machine all over it. Not that. I can't take that.

CLARA. Beggars shouldn't be——

THIEF. Where's my coat? That settles it.

CLARA. Oh, don't go! I didn't mean it. Honestly I didn't. It just slipped out. You mustn't leave us like this——

THIEF. I don't have to put up with such——

CLARA. Oh, please stay, and take something! Haven't we anything you want? Charles, hold him; don't let him go. No, that won't do any good. Talk to him——

CHARLES. Don't be so sensitive, old man. She didn't mean it. You know how those old sayings slip out—just say themselves. She only called you a little beggar anyway. You ought to hear what she calls me sometimes.

THIEF. I don't want to. I'm not her husband. And I don't believe she does it in the same way, either. But I'm not going to be mean about this. I'll give you another chance. Trot out your curios.

CHARLES. How about this? Old lustre set of Clara's grandmother's. I'm no judge of such things myself, but if you could use it, take it. Granddad gave it to her when they were sweethearts, didn't he, Clara?

THIEF. That! Old lustre? That jug won't be four years old its next birthday. Don't lay such things to your grandmother. Have some respect for the dead. If you gave more than $3.98 for it, they saw you coming.

CLARA. You don't know anything about it. You're just trying to humiliate us because you know you have the upper hand.

THIEF. All right. Go ahead. Take your own risks.

CLARA. There's this Sheffield tray?

THIEF. No.

CHARLES. Do you like Wedgewood?

THIEF. Yes, where is it? [*Looks at it.*] No.

CLARA. This darling hawthorne vase——

THIEF. Please take it away. It isn't hawthorne.

CHARLES. I suppose cloisonné——

THIEF. If they were any of them what you call them. But they aren't.

CHARLES. Well, if you'd consider burnt wood. That's a genuine burn.

THIEF. Nothing short of cremation would do it justice. Of course I've got to take one of them, if they're all you've got. But honestly, there isn't one genuine thing in this house, except Charles—and—and the ham sandwich.

CLARA [*takes miniature from cabinet*]. I wonder if you would treasure this as I do. It's very dear to me. It's grandmother——

THIEF [*suspiciously*]. Grandmother again?

CLARA. As a little girl. Painted on ivory. See that quaint old coral necklace. And those adorable yellow curls. And the pink circle comb. Would you like it?

THIEF. Trying to appeal to my sympathy. I've a good notion to take it to punish you. I

wonder if it IS your grandmother. There isn't the slightest family resemblance. Look here!—it is!—it's a copy of the Selby miniature! Woman, do you know who that IS? It's Harriet Beecher Stowe at twelve. What have you done with my overcoat?

CHARLES. I give up. Here it is. Clara, that was too bad.

CLARA. I wanted to see if he'd know.

CHARLES. There's no use trying to save us after this. We'll just have to bear the disgrace.

THIEF. Charles, you're a trump! I'll even take that old daub for YOU. Give it to me.

CHARLES. Wait a minute. You won't have to. Say, Clara, where is that old picture of Cousin Paul? It's just as bad as it pretends to be, if genuineness is all you want.

THIEF [*suspiciously*]. Who is Cousin Paul? Don't try to ring in Daniel Webster on me.

CHARLES. Cousin of mine. Lives on a farm near Madison, Wisconsin.

THIEF. You don't claim the picture is by Sargent or Whistler?

CLARA. It couldn't be——

THIEF [*ignoring her pointedly*]. Do you, Charles?

CHARLES. Certainly not. It's a water colour of the purest water, and almost a speaking likeness.

THIEF. I'll take Cousin Paul. Probably he has human interest.

CHARLES. That's the last thing I should have thought of in connection with Cousin Paul.

THIEF. Bring him, but wrapped, please. My courage might fail me if I saw him face to face.

CHARLES [*leaving room for picture*]. Mine always does.

THIEF. While Charles is wrapping up the picture, I want to know how you got back so early. Your maid said you were going to the Garrick.

CLARA. We told her so. But we went to the moving pictures.

THIEF. You ought not to go to the movies. It will destroy your literary taste and weaken your minds.

CLARA. I don't care for them myself, but Charles won't see anything else.

THIEF. You ought to make him. Men only go to the theatre anyway because their wives take them. They'd rather stay at home or play billiards. You have a chance right there. Charles will go where you take him. By and by he will begin to like it. Now to-night there was a Granville Barker show at the Garrick, and you went to the movies to see a woman whose idea of cuteness is to act as if she had a case of arrested mental development.

CHARLES [*entering, doing up picture*]. Silly old films, anyway. But Clara *will* go. Goes afternoons when I'm not here, and then drags me off again in the evening. Here's your picture, as soon as I get it tied up. Can't tell you how grateful we are. Shall we make it unanimous, Clara?

CLARA. I haven't the vote, you know. Clumsy! give me the picture.

THIEF. Don't try to thank me. If you'll give up this shamming I'll feel repaid for my time and trouble [*looking at watch*]. By Jove! it's far too much time. I must make tracks this minute. I'll feel repaid if you'll take my advice about the theatre for one thing, and—why don't you bundle all this imitation junk together and sell it and get one genuine good thing?

[*Clara leaves, apparently for more string.*]

CHARLES. Who'd buy them?

THIEF. There must be other people in the world with taste as infallibly bad as yours.

CHARLES. Call that honest?

THIEF. Certainly. I'm not telling you to sell them as relics. You couldn't in the first place, except to a home for the aged and indigent blind. But I know a man who needs them. They'd rejoice his heart. They'd be things of beauty to him. I wish I could help you pick out something with your money. But I don't dare risk seeing you again.

CLARA [*reëntering, with the picture tied*]. Why not? There's honour among thieves.

THIEF. There *is*. If you were thieves, I'd know just how far to trust you. Now, I'd be willing to trust Charles as man to man. Gentleman's agreement. But [*looking at Clara*] I don't know——

CHARLES. Clara is just as honest as we are—with her own class. But your profession puts you outside the pale with her; you're her natural enemy. You haven't any rights. But you've been a liberal education for us both.

THIEF. I've been liberal. You meet me—listen!—there are footsteps on the porch. I—I've waited too long. Here I've stood talking——

CHARLES. Well, stop it now, can't you? I don't see how you've ever got anywhere. Hide!

THIEF. No, it can't be done. If you'll play fair, I'm safe enough here in this room, safer than anywhere else. Pretend I'm a friend of yours. You will? Gentleman's agreement? [*He shakes hands with Charles.*]

CHARLES. Gentleman's agreement. My word of honour.

CLARA [*offers her hand as Charles starts for the door*]. Gentleman's agreement, but only in this. I haven't forgiven you for what you've said. If I ever get you in a tight place—look out.

THIEF [*taking her hand*]. Don't tell more than one necessary lie. It's so easy to get started in that sort of thing. Stick to it that I'm a friend of the family and that I've been spending the evening. God knows I have!

CLARA. I'll try to stick to that. But can't I improvise a little? It's such fun!

THIEF. Not a bit. Not one little white lie.

CHARLES [*entering with a young man behind him*]. It's a man from the *News*. He says he was out here on another story and he's got a big scoop. There's been some artistic burglary in the neighbourhood and he's run onto it. I told him we hadn't lost anything and that we don't want to get into the papers; but he wants us to answer a few questions.

REPORTER. Please do. I need some stuff about the neighbourhood.

CLARA. I don't know, Charles, but that it's our duty. [*She smiles wickedly at the thief.*] Something we say may help catch the thieves. Perhaps we owe it to law and order.

REPORTER. That's right. Would you object if I used your name?

[CHARLES *and the* THIEF *motion to* CLARA *to keep still, but throughout the rest of the conversation she disregards their frantic signals, and sails serenely on.*]

CLARA. I don't know that we should mind if you mention us nicely. Will the Hempsteds be in? I shan't mind it, if they don't.

REPORTER. Good for you. Now, have you——

CLARA. We *have* missed something. We haven't had time to look thoroughly, but we do know that one of our pictures is gone.

[*The men are motioning to her, but she goes on sweetly.*]

REPORTER. A-a-ah! Valuable picture. He hasn't taken anything that wasn't best of its class. Remarkable chap. Must be the same one that rifled the Pierpont collection of illuminated manuscripts. Culled the finest pieces without a mistake.

THIEF [*interested*]. He made one big mistake. He——[*stops short*].

REPORTER. Know the Pierponts?

THIEF. Er—ye-es. I've been in their house. [*Retires from the conversation. Clara smiles.*]

REPORTER. Well, believe me, if he's taken any-

thing, your reputation as collectors is made. Picture, eh? Old master, I suppose?

CLARA. A family portrait. We treasured it for that. Associations, you know.

REPORTER. Must have been valuable, all right. Depend on him to know. He doesn't run away with any junk. Who was the artist?

CLARA. We don't know—definitely.

REPORTER. Never heard it attributed to anybody?

CLARA. We don't care to make any point of such things. But there have been people who have thought—it was not—a—a Gilbert Stuart.

CHARLES. Clara!

CLARA. I don't know much about such things myself. But our friend [*nods toward the* THIEF], Mr.—Mr. Hibbard—who has some reputation as a collector, has always said that it was—not. In spite of that fact, he had offered to take it off our hands.

CHARLES. Clara, you're going too far——

REPORTER. She's quite right. You're wrong, Mr. Hibbard. You may be good, but this fellow KNOWS. Too bad you didn't take it while the taking was good. This fellow never sells. Of course he can't exhibit. Just loves beautiful things. No, sir, it was real.

THIEF [*between his teeth*]. It wasn't. Of all the——

CLARA [*smiling*]. You take your beating so ungracefully, Mr. Hibbard. The case, you see, is all against you.

THIEF. Be careful. The picture may be found at any minute. Don't go too far.

CLARA. I hardly think it will be found unless the thief is caught. And I have such perfect confidence in his good sense that I don't expect that.

REPORTER. Lots of time for a getaway. When was he here?

CLARA. He was gone when we came from the theatre. But we must almost have caught him. Some of our finest things were gathered together here on the table ready for his flight. How he must have hated to leave them, all the miniatures and the cloisonné. I almost feel sorry for him.

CHARLES. I do.

CLARA. You see, we went to the Garrick for the Granville Barker show. Mr. Hibbard took us [*she smiles sweetly at him*]. I'm devoted to the best in drama and I always insist that Charles and Mr. Hibbard shall take me only to the finest things. And now we come home to find our—you're sure it was a Gilbert Stuart?—gone.

THIEF. I've got to be getting out of here! Can't stay a minute longer! Charles, I wish you luck in that reform we were speaking of, but I haven't much hope [*looking at Clara*]. There is such a thing as total depravity. Oh, here! [*taking package from under his arm*]. What am I thinking of? I was running away with your package [*hands it to Clara*].

CLARA [*refusing it*]. Oh, but it's yours, Mr. Hibbard. I couldn't think of taking it. Really, you must keep it to remember us by. Put it among

your art treasures at home, next to your lovely illuminated manuscripts, and whenever you look at it remember us and this delightful evening, from which we are all taking away so much. You must keep it—that's part of the bargain, isn't it? And now are we even?

THIEF. Even? Far from it. I yield you your woman's right to the last word, and I admit it's the best [*stoops and kisses her hand*]. Good-night, Clara. [*To the* REPORTER.] May I give you a lift back to town?

REPORTER. Thanks. As far as the Hempsted's corner. Good-night. Thank you for this much help. [*Exeunt.*]

CHARLES. Thank goodness, they've gone. What relief! That pace is too rapid for me. You had me running round in circles. But he's got the picture, and we're safe at last. But don't you think, Clara, you took some awful risks? You goaded him pretty far.

CLARA. I had to. Did you hear him call me Clara?

CHARLES [*chuckling*]. He doesn't know our name. But he wasn't a bad fellow, was he? I couldn't help liking him in spite of his impudence.

CLARA. You showed it. You took sides with him against me all the time the reporter was here. But you know, he was right about our house. It's all wrong. The Hempsteds would see it in a minute. I believe I'll clear out this cabinet and have this room done over in mahogany.

CHARLES. Too expensive this winter.

CLARA. Birch will do just as well—nobody knows the difference. Listen! is he coming back?

REPORTER [*in the doorway*]. Excuse me—listen. Mr. Hibbard says you've given him the wrong package. He says you need this to go with the picture of your grandmother. And he says, sir, that you need to get wise to your own family. He's waiting for me. Good-night! [*Exit.*]

CHARLES [*angrily*]. Get wise to my own family? He may know all about art [*undoing the picture*] but I guess I know my own relatives. [*Holds up picture so that audience can see it, but he can't*] and if that isn't a picture of my own cousin Paul, I'll eat——[*sees* CLARA *laughing*]. What the devil! [*Looks at picture, which represents* GEORGE WASHINGTON.] Clara! you did that! [*laughs uproariously*]. You little cheat!

[THE CURTAIN]

EUGENICALLY SPEAKING

BY

EDWARD GOODMAN

*EUGENICALLY SPEAKING

"Eugenically Speaking" was produced by the Washington Square Players, under the direction of Philip Moeller, as part of their first programme at the Bandbox Theatre, New York City, beginning February 19, 1915.

In the cast, in the order of their appearance, were the following:

UNA BRAITHEWAITE	*Florence Enright*
GEORGE COXEY	*Karl Karsten*
MR. BRAITHEWAITE	*George C. Somnes*
JARVIS *a manservant*	*Ralph Roeder*

The scene was designed by Engelbert Gminska and Miss Enright's costume by Mrs. Edward Flammer.

"Eugenically Speaking" was subsequently revived by the Washington Square Players at the Comedy Theatre, New York City, beginning August 30, 1916. In this production Arthur Hohl played the part of George Coxey; Robert Strange, Wm. Braithewaite; and Spalding Hall, Jarvis.

CHARACTERS

UNA, *A girl*
GEORGE COXEY, *a conductor*
MR. BRAITHEWAITE, *a financier*
JARVIS, *a butler*

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Time: Between to-day and to-morrow.

SCENE: A room in the Braithewaite mansion, richly but tastefully furnished. Among these furnishings it is necessary for the play to note, besides the door at the back, only the table that stands a little to the right of the centre of the room, with a statue on it, and three chairs which stand, one to the right, one to the left, and one in the middle.

It is a winter afternoon, and the room is illuminated by invisible lights.

Enter UNA, *followed by* GEORGE COXEY. UNA *is a charming, fashionable girl of twenty with a suave blend of will and poise.* GEORGE COXEY *is a handsome, well-built, magnetic-looking youth of about twenty-five. He is dressed in the garb of a street-car conductor and carries the cap in his hand. Although somewhat inconvenienced and preoccupied with the novelty of his surroundings and his situation, he remains, in the main, in excellent self-possession, an occasional twinkle in his eye showing that he is even quietly alive to a certain humour in the adventure. Above all, his attitude is that rare one, which we like to feel typical of American youth, of facing an unusual situation firmly, and seeing and grasping its possibilities quickly.*

He stands near the door, waiting, examining the room and warming his hands, while UNA *goes to the bell and rings it and then proceeds to the mirror to primp a little. When she is finished she turns and notices him.*

UNA. Why, my dear man, sit down. [*She points to a chair at the right.*]

GEORGE. Thanks, after you.

UNA [*laughs*]. Oh! Excuse me. I forgot. You're a car conductor. Naturally you're polite.

GEORGE. Not naturally, miss. But I've learned.

UNA. An apt pupil, too. Let me teach you then that the ruder you are to a woman, the more she'll hate you—or love you. [*She goes up to him and invites him with a gesture.*] Sit down.

[GEORGE *remains immobile.*]

The polite are not only bourgeois, they're boring.

GEORGE. When I know I'm right, I stick to it.

UNA. But you must grow tired of standing.

GEORGE. If I did, I'd lose my job.

UNA. You have already. Sit down.

GEORGE [*firmly*]. After you.

UNA [*taking the chair, centre, and sitting on it*]. You're splendid. Now!

[GEORGE *sits in the offered chair a little stiffly.*]

UNA. Isn't that better than ringing up fares?

GEORGE [*smiling at his attempt at a pun*]. Fairly.

UNA [*rising, perturbed*]. No! You mustn't do that. That's vulgar.

GEORGE [*rising in alarm*]. What have I done?

UNA [*vexed again*]. Sit down. You mustn't jump up when I do.

[*He remains standing. Vexed but smiling she sits.*] Well, there!

[*He sits down.*]

You punned! You mustn't. We all like puns, but it's good form to call them bad taste.

[*Enter* JARVIS *the Butler.*]

JARVIS [*starts slightly at perceiving the situation, but controls himself*]. Did you ring for me, miss?

UNA. Yes. Please tell my father that I'd like to see him at once.

[JARVIS *goes out.*

UNA. Do you know the reason that you are here?

GEORGE. The hundred dollars you gave me.

UNA. No——

GEORGE. Yes. I wouldn't have left my job if you hadn't given me that.

UNA. I suppose not. But I mean, do you know why I brought you here?

GEORGE. I'm waiting to see.

UNA [*enthusiastically*]. I wonder if you'll like it.

GEORGE. Your father?

UNA. No. Dad's a dear. That is, he is when he sees you mean business.

[*Enter* MR. BRAITHEWAITE. *He is a well-preserved man near sixty, almost always completely master of himself. On seeing* COXEY *he, too, gives a little start and then controls himself.*]

BRAITHEWAITE. Una, dear?

UNA [*jumping up in excitement*]. Oh, Daddy! I'm so glad you were in. [*To* GEORGE, *who has risen, too.*] Keep your seat. Draw up a chair, Dad—I've done it.

BRAITHEWAITE. Done what?

UNA [*bringing up a chair and placing it to her*

right]. Do sit down, Dad. He's so delicious. He won't sit down till we do—and you know how much they have to stand.

BRAITHEWAITE [*looks at* GEORGE *and* UNA *and then sits in the chair allotted to him, whereupon* UNA *sits in hers and then* GEORGE *sits down*]. Now, dear, what is it you have done?

UNA. Selected a husband.

[GEORGE *moves a little uneasily.* BRAITHEWAITE *looks at* GEORGE *and then speaks to* UNA.]

BRAITHEWAITE. You mean?

UNA [*pointing to* GEORGE]. Him!

[GEORGE *rises in discomfiture.*]

Do sit down. We're all sitting now, you see.

[GEORGE *brings himself to sit down again.*]

BRAITHEWAITE. But, my dear——

UNA. Now don't say a word until you hear the whole story. You read that article by Shaw in the *Metropolitan*, didn't you? I did. You remember what he wrote? "The best eugenic guide is the sex attraction—the Voice of Nature." He thinks the trouble is at present that we dare not marry out of our own sphere. But I'll show you exactly what he says. [*She fusses in her handbag and pulls out a sheet of a magazine which she unfolds as she says:*] I always carry the article with me. It's so stimulating.

BRAITHEWAITE [*protesting*]. You're not going to read me a whole Shaw article, are you? It's five o'clock now and we've a dinner date at eight, dear.

UNA. It's a Shaw article, not a Shaw preface. However, I'll only read the passage I've marked. Listen. [*She reads.*] "I do not believe you will ever have any improvement in the human race until you greatly widen the area of possible sexual selection; until you make it as wide as the numbers of the community make it. Just consider what occurs at the present time. I walk down Oxford Street, let me say, as a young man." He might just as well have said "young woman," you know.

BRAITHEWAITE. And?

UNA [*continues reading*]. "I see a woman who takes my fancy." With me it would be a man, of course.

BRAITHEWAITE. For your purpose, of course.

UNA [*continuing again*]. "I fall in love with her. It would seem very sensible in an intelligent community that I should take off my hat and say to this lady: 'Will you excuse me; but you attract me strongly, and if you are not already engaged, would you mind taking my name and address and considering whether you would care to marry me?'

[BRAITHEWAITE *looks uncomfortably at* GEORGE *who looks uncomfortable, though amused, himself.*]

Now I have no such chance at present."

BRAITHEWAITE. Exactly. You see, he admits it.

UNA. Yes, but why shouldn't I have the chance? That set me thinking. I decided he was right. I am intelligent, am I not?

BRAITHEWAITE. I refuse to commit myself, dear, until I hear all your story.

UNA. Well, I decided I'd make the chance. You see, I—I've been led to think recently that I ought to be getting married.

BRAITHEWAITE. May I ask why?

UNA. Yes, dear, but I'd rather not answer.

BRAITHEWAITE. I beg pardon.

UNA. And when I looked about me for the possibilities in my own set, I—[*she makes a face*]—well, I wasn't attracted.

BRAITHEWAITE. I admit, in society, as a rule, the women grow stronger and the men weaker.

UNA. Exactly. And I knew you wanted to be a *proud* grandfather.

BRAITHEWAITE. You're mistaken, dear. I hadn't given the subject any thought; so I had no desires.

UNA. Well, I have . . . [BRAITHEWAITE *slightly shows that he is perhaps shocked.* UNA *notices this and continues in explanation*] given the subject a good deal of thought. I've spent days buying second-hand clothing to give away at the missions and lodging houses in order to have a look.

BRAITHEWAITE. At least there was charity in that.

UNA. Yes. You see I didn't want charity to have to begin at my home. Self-preservation is the first law of Nature.

BRAITHEWAITE. And self-propagation, I suppose, the second.

UNA. Well—the missions were no good. They were all so starved and pinched-looking there I couldn't tell what they'd be like if they got proper nourishment. And I didn't want to take a chance. So I went to some coal yards.

BRAITHEWAITE. To find the devil not so black as painted?

UNA [*with a grimace*]. Blacker! I couldn't see what they looked like. Of course if I could have asked them to wash their faces.

BRAITHEWAITE [*looking at* GEORGE]. Considering what you have done, I don't see——

UNA. I did ask one, but he made some vulgar remark about black dirt and red paint. So I left him.

BRAITHEWAITE. And then?

UNA. I spent all to-day riding up and down town in street cars. It's very fascinating, Dad. All you can see for a nickel! I never realized what a public benefactor you were.

BRAITHEWAITE [*modestly*]. Oh, I am amply repaid.

UNA [*in explanation to* GEORGE]. Dad's the president of your traction company, you know.

[GEORGE *rises in fright.*]

Oh, that's all right. I've lost you your job, but I'll get you a better one as I promised. Don't be afraid of Dad—in the parlour. Sit down.

BRAITHEWAITE [*to* GEORGE]. You might as well make yourself physically comfortable, you know. There's no telling how my daughter may make us feel in other ways.

[GEORGE *sits down again, regaining his composure a little.*]

BRAITHEWAITE [*to* UNA]. And so to-day you investigated travelling in street cars?

UNA. Yes. "Joy-riding," you know. Then I

saw him—and decided. I knew he wouldn't dare to propose to me—under existing conditions.

BRAITHEWAITE. So you asked him to marry you?

UNA. Certainly not. I've too much consideration for you, dear.

BRAITHEWAITE. But I thought you said——?

UNA. I decided to bring him home to get your consent first.

[BRAITHEWAITE *starts to say something.*]

I knew you'd approve when you saw him. But I wanted to be sure I hadn't overlooked anything. And if I had, I didn't want to have raised his hopes for nothing. [*To* GEORGE.] Would you mind standing a moment, now, until Dad looks you over?

[GEORGE *fidgets a little in embarrassment.*]

BRAITHEWAITE. My dear, do you think the gentleman——?

UNA. "Gentleman!" Oh, yes, I forgot. I needn't have been so clumsy. [*She rises.* GEORGE *rises automatically. She continues to George*]. I apologize.

BRAITHEWAITE [*also rising and moving his chair aside*]. I fear you have been too rude.

UNA. So do I. I've never even introduced you. Father, this is—this is—— [*To* GEORGE.] By the way—I forgot to ask—what is your name?

GEORGE. Coxey, miss.

UNA [*sounding it*]. Coxey. What's the first name? I can't call my husband "Coxey," you know.

GEORGE. George, miss.

UNA [*triumphantly*]. George! There's a fine virile name for you. George Coxey! How strong that sounds! One of those names that would go equally well in the blue book or the police blotter.

GEORGE. I never——

UNA. Don't disclaim. I know you've never been arrested. One can see your goodness in your face.

BRAITHEWAITE [*reprovingly*]. Many of the best people go to jail now, dear.

UNA. I know. But he's not rich and thank heaven he's not a fanatic. Isn't he good-looking? And I'm sure he's strong. See those hands of his—a little rough, of course, but I like that, and so firm and, for his job, wonderfully clean. Don't hide them, George. They attracted me from the start.

BRAITHEWAITE. How did you come here with my daughter at all, sir?

UNA [*quickly*]. I got off with him at the car barn when he finished his run and asked him.

BRAITHEWAITE. Didn't you know you would lose your job by leaving that way?

GEORGE [*with a suppressed smile*]. Yes, sir.

BRAITHEWAITE. And you came at any rate?

GEORGE. You see, sir, she gave me——

UNA [*interrupting hurriedly*]. A beseeching look. Just one. I didn't use more than was necessary. [*Pointedly to* GEORGE.] You see, George, I have learnt economy from father. He hates me to be extravagant.

BRAITHEWAITE. That, my dear, is the chief objection I have to this episode—its extravagance.

UNA. Please don't call it an "episode," father.

BRAITHEWAITE. You must admit it's—rather unusual.

UNA. In England, lords always marry chorus girls.

BRAITHEWAITE. But he is a conductor.

GEORGE [*angry*]. Yes. And conductors are——

UNA. As hard working as chorus girls—only. Don't be snobbish, George. Of course a conductor is more unusual, I admit. I can't help that though—— [*To her father.*] You shouldn't have called me "Una," if you didn't want me to be unique.

BRAITHEWAITE [*reminiscently*]. That was most unfortunate—most. It was your mother's idea. She believed in symbols—and in a small family.

UNA. Oh! Was that why——? Well, no matter. I've always thought it meant individuality and I've done my best to live up to it. [*She looks at the statue.*] That statue ought to be on the other side of the room.

BRAITHEWAITE. I'll have some of the men move it to-morrow.

UNA. I'd like to see the effect now.

BRAITHEWAITE [*slightly annoyed at this seeming irrelevance*]. I wish I could teach you concentration. I'm not strong enough to move it myself, dear, and——

GEORGE. Can I?

BRAITHEWAITE. Why——

UNA. Oh! If you would!

[GEORGE *goes over to it and then hesitates what to do with his cap which he has in his hand.*]

UNA. I'll take that.

GEORGE [*giving it to her*]. Thanks. [*He bends and lifts the statue without effort, while* UNA *watches him admiringly, fingering his cap. When he reaches the other side of the room he stops, waveringly, awaiting instructions.*]

UNA [*talking as* GEORGE *waits*]. Look at him. He's as fine as the statue, isn't he? And you know what you think of that. See the strength he has?

BRAITHEWAITE. Well——

UNA [*to* GEORGE]. Thank you so much. You may put it back again. That was all I wanted. [*After* GEORGE *has.*] I hope I didn't overtax you.

GEORGE. Oh, it ain't very heavy.

UNA [*triumphantly to her father*]. You see!

BRAITHEWAITE. But he uses "ain't."

UNA [*imitating the reproof of her father*]. Many of the best people use "ain't" now, dear.

BRAITHEWAITE. Not with his enunciation.

UNA. What was yours like when you were a railroad signalman?

BRAITHEWAITE. Una! The past of a public man should be private.

UNA. George has our children's future before him. All the others I know have only their parents' past behind. You could give him a job suitable for my husband. I'll make my husband suitable for the job.

BRAITHEWAITE. But you don't know him, my dear.

UNA. I don't know myself for that matter. If I don't like him, it's easy enough to go to Reno.

BRAITHEWAITE. Then you insist?

UNA. I'm tremendously eager. It's so unusual.

BRAITHEWAITE. I suppose I could sue Shaw.

UNA. Don't be silly. Sue an Englishman with German sympathies! Where's your neutrality?

BRAITHEWAITE [*sinking into a chair*]. Very well.

UNA [*running up to* GEORGE *with delight*]. Then it's settled, dear. We're going to marry.

GEORGE. Excuse me, miss, we ain't.

BRAITHEWAITE [*shocked*]. "Ain't" again!

UNA [*correcting*]. "Aren't," dear—I mean, we are.

GEORGE. Not.

UNA [*backing away*]. Why not?

GEORGE. Because—I'm married already.

BRAITHEWAITE [*rising*]. What?

UNA. How annoying!

GEORGE. Married three years, and expecting a baby, Miss.

UNA [*troubled*]. Oh, please!

BRAITHEWAITE. You see what plunging means. I told you I believed in eugenic examinations first.

UNA [*walking up and down, thinking*]. Sh! Be quiet, father. Don't lose your head.

BRAITHEWAITE. Better than losing your heart.

UNA [*laughing*]. I have it. Of course. How stupid of me not to think. George.

GEORGE. Yes, miss.

BRAITHEWAITE. Wouldn't you better call him "Mr. Coxey" now?

UNA [*paying no heed to her father's remark*]. George, you must divorce your wife.

GEORGE. Me? Why, she's as good as gold and——

UNA. That's unfortunate. [*Thinking.*] Then I'll have to run away with you and let her get the divorce.

BRAITHEWAITE [*now really shocked*]. Una!

UNA [*innocently*]. What, Dad? Have you something better to suggest?

BRAITHEWAITE [*fuming*]. I can't permit it. I didn't mind the uncommon scandal of your marrying a car conductor, but I absolutely draw the line at common scandal.

UNA [*a little bored*]. Father, dear, why will you sometimes talk to me as though I were the Public Service Commission? There's going to be no scandal. You can keep it out of the newspapers.

GEORGE. Excuse me, but that don't make any difference. I don't want to get a divorce.

UNA. You don't? Why?

GEORGE [*embarrassed*]. Sounds like a song, I know, but—I love my wife.

UNA [*in despair*]. And you're the unusual man I'm to marry.

BRAITHEWAITE [*with the contempt of a professional toward an amateur*]. Stealing *nickels* doesn't develop the imagination.

UNA [*desperately*]. How can you love your wife? Some simple, economizing, prosaic, *hausfrau* who——

GEORGE [*with spirit*]. I don't know what you're saying, but you better be careful not to insult my wife. She's as good as you are and a rector's daughter.

UNA [*dumbfounded*]. What?

GEORGE. Yes. Daughter of one of the biggest

sky-pilots in town. I met her at a settlement house. She put the question to me, too.

UNA [*angry and doubting*]. She——?

GEORGE. Sure. I've been through something like this before or I'd never been able to stand it so well.

UNA [*as before*]. Your wife——?

GEORGE. Had a good deal more pluck than you, though. Up and told her father she would marry me if he liked it or lumped it. He said he'd cut her. And he did. We never seen him since. But Naomi and I don't care. That's her name; so you can see she's a Bible-poacher's daughter. Naomi and I've been happier than any people on earth. [*Sternly.*] She's taught me to stand when a lady was standing. That's why I wouldn't obey you. She's teaching me how to speak, too, and if I do say "ain't" and a lot of other things I oughtn't to when I'm excited, that ai—isn't her fault.

UNA. Then she—Naomi—has done everytning unusual that I wanted to do, before I did?

GEORGE. Sure. You can't be unusual to-day. Too much brains been in the world before.

UNA. How is it I never heard this story, if her father's so well known?

GEORGE. D'you think your father's the only one can keep things out of the papers?

UNA [*going over and weeping on her father's shoulder*]. Oh! And I wanted to be unique.

BRAITHEWAITE [*patting her*]. There, there, dear. [*To* GEORGE.] You'd better go, now, Coxey.

GEORGE. And my job?

BRAITHEWAITE. I'll see you still keep it.

GEORGE. Thanks. I don't want to.

BRAITHEWAITE. No?

GEORGE. I want a better.

BRAITHEWAITE [*putting his daughter aside*]. Indeed! Pray what?

GEORGE [*nonchalantly*]. Superintendent or something. I leave it to you. You know more about what jobs there are than I do.

BRAITHEWAITE [*controlling his anger*]. And on what basis do you ask for a better job?

GEORGE. Naomi always said my chance would come and I could take it, if I had nerve and my eyes open. I think now's the time.

BRAITHEWAITE. Why?

GEORGE. Oh, this story about your daughter wouldn't look nice.

UNA. Oh!

BRAITHEWAITE. You forget the power your father-in-law and I have in the press.

GEORGE. No, I don't. But I remember that you can't keep me from spreading the news among your men. And I don't think——

BRAITHEWAITE [*angry and advancing on him*]. I could have you prosecuted for blackmail, sir. Have you no honour?

GEORGE. Sure. My honour says provide for your family. I've got the makings of a big man in me, Mr. Braithewaite. You can't chain me down with a poor man's morals.

BRAITHEWAITE. Well! I——

GEORGE. I'll work in any job you give me, too. I'm not asking for a cinch, only a chance. If she—

[*pointing to* UNA]—could teach me, Naomi can.

BRAITHEWAITE [*after a pause*]. Well, call around at my office in the morning.

GEORGE. Thanks. [*He goes out.*

UNA [*sitting to weep*]. And I thought I could be unusual.

BRAITHEWAITE [*patting her*]. It's easy enough for Shaw, dear. He only writes it.

UNA [*jumping up.*] That's it. I'll write it. I'll write a play showing it's useless trying to escape the usual. [*Running up to her father,* GEORGE'S *cap in her hands.*] That will be unusual, won't it, Dad?

[*Reënter* GEORGE].

GEORGE. Excuse me. I left my cap.

UNA [*stretching it out to him without looking at him*]. Here it is.

GEORGE [*taking it*]. Thanks. [*Approaching her.*] Buck up, miss! You meant well.

UNA. I suppose I was too daring.

GEORGE. If you ask me, I think the trouble was you and that Shaw fellow wasn't daring enough. Marriage is a very particular sort of business. Now if you'd come up to me in the street and just asked me to—— [UNA *and* BRAITHEWAITE *look at* GEORGE.] Well—I—I guess I'll go. But remember my tip next try, miss.

[*He goes out quickly, leaving* UNA *gradually grasping the idea and appreciating it, while her father's shock at what* GEORGE *has said is increased only by noticing his daughter's reception of the words.*]

[THE CURTAIN]

THE MEDICINE SHOW

A Comedy

BY

STUART WALKER

THE MEDICINE SHOW*

A Comedy

CHARACTERS

LUT'ER.
GIZ.
DR. STEV'N VANDEXTER.

THE SCENE is on the south bank of the Ohio River. An old soap box, a log and a large stone are visible. The river is supposed to flow between the stage and the audience. In the background, at the top of the "grade," is the village of Rock Springs.

[PROLOGUE: *This is only a quarter of a play. Its faults are many. Come, glory in them with us.*

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"THE MEDICINE SHOW" was first produced by Stuart Walker's Portmanteau Theatre, with the following cast:

LUT'ER	*Williard Webster*
GIZ	*Edgar Stehli*
DR. STEV'N VANDEXTER	*Lew Medbury*

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You are a little boy once more lying on your rounded belly on the cool, damp sands beside the beautiful river. You are still young enough to see the wonder that everywhere touches the world; and men are in the world—all sorts of men. But you can still look upon them with the shining eyes of brotherhood. You can still feel the mystery that is true understanding. Everywhere about you men and things are reaching for the infinite, each in his own way, be it big or little, be it the moon or a medicine show; and you yourself are not yet decided whether to reach for the stars or go a-fishing. Brother!

Lut'er enters or rather oozes in.

He is a tall, expressionless, uncoördinated person who might be called filthy were it not for the fact that the dirt on his skin and on his clothes seems an inherent part of him. He has a wan smile that—what there is of it—is not displeasing. Strangely enough, his face is always smooth-shaven. He carries a fishing pole made from a tree twig and equipped with a thread knotted frequently and a bent pin for hook.

LUT'ER *looks about and his eyes light on the stone. He attempts to move it with his bare foot to the water's edge, but it is too heavy for him. Next he looks at the log, raises his foot to move it, then abandons the attempt because his eyes rest on the lighter soap box. This he puts in position, never deigning to touch it with his hands. Then he sits calmly and drawing a fishing worm from the pocket of his shirt fastens it on the pin-hook and casts his line into the water. Thereafter he takes no apparent interest in fishing.*

After a moment GIZ *enters.*

GIZ *is somewhat dirtier than* LUT'ER *but the dirt is less assimilated and consequently less to be condoned. Besides, he is fuzzy with a beard of long standing. He may have been shaved some Saturdays ago—but quite ago.*

GIZ *doesn't speak to* LUT'ER *and* LUT'ER *doesn't speak to* GIZ, *but* LUT'ER *suggests life by continued chewing and he acknowledges the proximity of* GIZ *by spitting and wiping his lips with his hand.* GIZ *having tried the log and the rock finally chooses the rock and acknowledges* LUT'ER'S *salivary greeting by spitting also; but he wipes his mouth on his sleeve.*

After a moment he reaches forward with his bare foot and touches the water.]

GIZ. 'Tis warm as fresh milk.

[LUT'ER, *not to be wholly unresponsive, spits. A fresh silence falls upon them.*]

GIZ. 'S *Hattie Brown* came in?

[LUT'ER *spits and almost shakes his head negatively.*]

She's a mighty good little steam-boat.

LUT'ER. She's water-logged.

GIZ. She ain't water-logged.

LUT'ER. She is.

GIZ. She ain't.

LUT'ER. She is.

GIZ. She ain't.

[*The argument dies of malnutrition. After a moment of silence* GIZ *speaks.*]

GIZ. 'S river raisin'?

LUT'ER. Nup!

[*Silence.*]

GIZ. Fallin'?

LUT'ER. Nup!

GIZ. Standin' still?

LUT'ER. Uh!

[*The conversation might continue if* GIZ *did not catch a mosquito on his leg.*]

GIZ. Gosh! A galler-nipper at noonday!

[LUT'ER *scratches back of his ear warily.*]

GIZ. An' look at the whelp!

[GIZ *scratches actively, examines the wound and anoints it with tobacco juice.*

The Play would be ended at this moment for lack of varied action if DR. STEV'N VAN-DEXTER *did not enter.*

He is an eager, healthy-looking man with a whitish beard that long washing in Ohio River water has turned yellowish. He wears spectacles and his clothes and general appearance are somewhat an improvement upon LUT'ER *and* GIZ. *Furthermore, he wears what were shoes and both supports of his suspenders are fairly intact. He is whittling a piece of white pine with a large jack-knife.*

Seeing LUT'ER *and* GIZ *he draws the log between them and sits.*

After a moment in which three cuds are audibly chewed, DR. STEV'N *speaks.*]

DOCTOR. What gits me is how they done it.

[*For the first time* LUT'ER *turns his head as admission that someone is there.* GIZ *looks*

up with a dawn of interest under his beard. Silence.]

DOCTOR. I traded a two-pound catfish for a box of that salve: an' I don't see how they done it.

[LUT'ER *having turned his head keeps it turned. Evidently* DR. STEV'N *always has something of interest to say.*]

GIZ. Kickapoo?

DOCTOR. Ye'. Kickapoo Indian Salve. I don't think no Indian never seen it.

[*He looks at* GIZ *for acquiescence.*]

GIZ. Y'ain't never sure about nothin' these days.

[DR. STEV'N *looks at* LUT'ER *for acquiescence also, and* LUT'ER *approving turns his head forward and spits assent.*]

DOCTOR. I smelled it an' it smelled like ker'sene. I biled it an' it biled over an' burnt up like ker'sene. . . . I don't think it was nothin' but ker'sene, an' lard.

GIZ. Reckon 't wuz common ker'sene?

DOCTOR. I don't know whether 't wuz common ker'sene but I know 't wuz ker'sene. . . . An' I bet ker'sene'll cure heaps o' troubles if yer use it right.

GIZ. That air doctor said the salve ud cure most anything.

LUT'ER [*as though a voice from the grave, long forgotten*]. Which doctor?

GIZ. The man doctor—him with the p'inted musstash.

LUT'ER. I seen him take a egg outer Jimmie

Weldon's ear—an' Jimmie swore he didn't have no hen in his head.

DOCTOR. But the lady doctor said it warn't so good—effie-cacious she called it—withouten you took two bottles o' the buildin' up medicine, a box o' the liver pills an' a bottle o' the hair fluid.

GIZ. She knowed a lot. She told me just how I felt an' she said she hated to trouble me but I had a internal ailment. An' she said I needed all their medicine jus' like the Indians used it. But I told her I didn't have no money so she said maybe the box o' liver pills would do if I'd bring 'em some corn for their supper.

DOCTOR. Y' got the liver pills?

GIZ. Uh-huh.

LUT'ER. Took any?

GIZ. Nup, I'm savin' 'em.

LUT'ER. What fur?

GIZ. Till I'm feelin' sicker'n I am now.

DOCTOR. Where are they?

GIZ. In m' pocket.

[*They chew in silence for a minute.*]

DOCTOR. Yes, sir! It smelled like ker'sene ter me—and ker'sene 't wuz. . . . Ker'sene'll cure heaps o' things if you use it right.

[*He punctuates his talk with covert glances at* GIZ. *His thoughts are on the pills.*]

DOCTOR. Which pocket yer pills in, GIZ?

GIZ [*discouragingly*]. M' hip pocket. [*Again they chew.*]

DOCTOR. The Family Medicine Book where I learned ter be a doctor said camphor an' ker'sene

an' lard rubbed on flannel an' put on the chest 'ud cure tizic, maybe. [*He looks at* GIZ.]

DOCTOR. An' what ud cure tizic ought ter cure anything, I think. . . . I'd 'a' cured m' second wife if the winder hadn't blowed out an' she got kivered with snow. After that she just wheezed until she couldn't wheeze no longer. An' so when I went courtin' my third wife, I took, a stitch in time an' told her about the camphor an' ker'sene an' lard. [*Ruefully*] She's a tur'ble healthy woman. [*His feelings and his curiosity having overcome his tact, he blurts out.*] Giz, why'n th' hell don't yer show us yer pills!

GIZ. Well—if yer wanner see 'em—here they air.

[*He takes the dirty, mashed box out of his hip pocket and hands it to the Doctor. The Doctor opens the box and smells the pills.*]

DOCTOR. Ker'sene. . . . Smell 'em, Lut'er. [*He holds the box close to* LUT'ER'S *nose.*]

LUT'ER [*with the least possible expenditure of energy*]. Uh!

DOCTOR. Ker'sene! . . . Well, I guess it's good for the liver, too. . . . Gimme one, Giz?

GIZ. I ain't got so many I can be givin' 'em ter everybody.

DOCTOR. Jus' one, Giz.

GIZ. She said I ought ter take 'em all fer a cure.

LUT'ER. What yer got, Giz? [*Calling a man by name is a great effort for* LUT'ER.]

GIZ. Mostly a tired feelin' an' sometimes a

crick in th' back. [LUT'ER *displays a sympathy undreamed of.*]

LUT'ER. Gimme one, Giz.

GIZ. Gosh! You want th' whole box, don't yer?

LUT'ER. Keep yer pills. [*He spits.*]

DOCTOR. What's ailin' *you*, Lut'er?

LUT'ER. Oh, a tired feelin'. [*There is a long moment of suspended animation, but the* DOCTOR *knows that the mills of the gods grind slowly—and he waits for* LUT'ER *to continue.*] An' a crick in m' back.

DOCTOR. I'll cure yer, Lut'er. [LUT'ER *just looks.*] If that Kickapoo doctor with the p'inted muss-tash kin cure yer, I guess I can.

GIZ [*who has been thinking pretty hard*]. Got any terbaccer, Doc?

DOCTOR. Yep.

GIZ. Well, here's a pill fer a chaw. [*He and the* DOCTOR *rise.*]

[GIZ *takes a pill out of the box and the* DOCTOR *takes his tobacco from his pocket, reaches out his hand for the pill and holds out the tobacco, placing his thumb definitely on the plug so that* GIZ *can bite off so much and no more.* GIZ *bites and the Doctor takes over the pill.* LUT'ER *not to be outdone takes a battered plug of tobacco from his pocket and bites off an unlimited "chaw." The Doctor takes his knife from his pocket and cuts the pill, smelling it.*]

DOCTOR. Ker'sene! [*He tastes it.*] Ker'sene! Now I been thinkin' things over, Lut'er and Giz. . . . [*He tastes the pill again.*]

Ker'sene, sure! [*He sits down on the log once more, spits carefully and crosses his legs.*] I got a business proposition to make. [*Silence.* LUT'ER *spits and crosses his legs, and* GIZ *just spits.*]

DOCTOR. There ain't enough home industry here in Rock Springs. We got a canning fact'ry and a stea'mill; but here comes a medicine show from Ioway—a Kickapoo Indian Medicine Show from Ioway! Now—what we need in Rock Springs is a medicine show! [*He waits for the effect upon the audience.*]

LUT'ER [*after a pause*]. How yer goin' ter git it?

DOCTOR. Well, here's my proposition. Ain't we got as much horse sense as them Ioway Indians?

LUT'ER. A damn sight more. [*That is the evident answer to the* DOCTOR, *but* LUT'ER *develops a further idea.*] We got the country from the Indians.

GIZ [*after a moment of accumulating admiration*]. By Golly, Lut'er, yer right.

DOCTOR. Now, I got some medicine science. I'd 'a' cured my second wife if it hadn't been for that busted winder.

GIZ. Yeh, but what come o' yer first wife?

DOCTOR. I could 'a' cured her, too, only I hadn't found the Family Medicine Book then.

LUT'ER. Well, what I wanter know is—what's yer proposition. . . . I'm in a hurry. . . . Here comes the *Hattie Brown.*

[*The* HATTIE BROWN *and the whistle of the steam-mill indicate noon.* LUT'ER *takes in the line—removes the fishing worm and puts it in his pocket.*]

DOCTOR. Well, I'll make the salve an' do the talkin'; Giz'll sort o' whoop things up a bit and Lut'er'll git cured.

LUT'ER. What'll I get cured of?

DOCTOR. Oh, lumbago an' tired feelin' . . . crick in the back and tizic.

LUT'ER. But who'll take a egg out o' somebody's ear?

DOCTOR. Giz'll learn that.

LUT'ER [*with a wan smile that memory illuminates.*] An' who'll play the pianny?

Doctor. Besteena, my daughter.

LUT'ER. Where we goin'?

DOCTOR. We'll go ter Lavanny first.

LUT'ER. How'll we git there?

DOCTOR. Walk—unless somebody give us a tote.

GIZ. We kin go in my John-boat.

LUT'ER. Who'll row? [*There is fear in his voice.*]

GIZ. We'll take turns. [LUT'ER *looks with terror upon* GIZ.]

LUT'ER. How fur is it?

DOCTOR. Three an' a half mile. . . . Will you go, Lut'er?

LUT'ER [*evidently thinking deeply*]. How fur is it?

GIZ. Three an' a half mile.

DOCTOR. Will yer go, Lut'er?

LUT'ER. Uh-h.

DOCTOR. Huh?

GIZ. He said, uh-huh.

[LUT'ER *chews in silence.*]

DOCTOR. I thought he said uh-uh.

GIZ. He said uh-huh.

DOCTOR. He didn't say nothin' o' the sort—he said uh-uh.

[*They turn to* LUT'ER *questioningly. He is chewing intensely.*]

LUT'ER [*after a pause*]. How fur did yer say it wuz?

DOCTOR. Three an' a half mile.

[*Silence.*]

GIZ. We'll each take a oar.

[*Silence. A stentorian voice is heard calling "Stee'vun." The* DOCTOR *rises, hastily.*]

DOCTOR. What d'yer say, Lut'er?

LUT'ER. It's three an' a half mile ter Lavanny —an' three an' a half mile back. . . . Pretty fur.

DOCTOR. We kin come back on the current.

LUT'ER. Three an' a half mile air three an' a half mile—current or no current.

[*Again the masterful female voice calls "Stee'vun." There is no mistaking its meaning. The* DOCTOR *is torn between home and business.* LUT'ER *takes up his rod, rebaits the hook with the fishing worm from his pocket and casts his line into the river.*]

LUT'ER. I'll think it over . . . but I ain't givin' yuh no hope. . . . Three an' a half mile one way air pretty fur . . . but two ways—it's turruble.

DOCTOR. Come on, Giz. We'll talk it over.

[*The* DOCTOR *and* GIZ *leave* LUT'ER *to his*

problem. LUT'ER *is undecided. He is at a crisis in his life. He spits thoughtfully and looks after the retreating* DOCTOR *and* GIZ.]

LUT'ER. Three an' a half mile. . . . [*He takes in his line and removes the fishing worm. He rises and looks again after the* DOCTOR *and* GIZ. *He hesitates.*] . . . two ways. . . . [*He starts in the opposite direction, as he justifies himself to his inner self.*] Rock Springs is fur enough fur me! [*When he disappears the play is over.*]

[THE CURTAIN]

THE LITTLE MAN

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

THE LITTLE MAN*

CHARACTERS

LITTLE MAN.
WAITER.
ENGLISHMAN.
ENGLISHWOMAN.
AMERICAN.
GERMAN.
DUTCH YOUTH.
OFFICIAL.
BABY.
MOTHER.

SCENE I.—Afternoon, on the departure platform of an Austrian railway station. At several little tables outside the buffet persons are taking refreshment, served by a pale young waiter. On a seat against the wall of the buffet a woman of lowly station is sitting beside two large bundles, on one of which she has placed her baby, swathed in a black shawl.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE. Since it is just possible that someone may think *The Little Man* has a deep, dark reference to the war it may be as well to state that this whimsey was written in October, 1913.

WAITER [*approaching a table whereat sit an English traveller and his wife*]. Zwei Kaffee?

ENGLISHMAN [*paying*]. Thanks. [*To his wife, in an Oxford voice.*] Sugar?

ENGLISHWOMAN [*in a Cambridge voice*]. One.

AMERICAN TRAVELLER [*with field-glasses and a pocket camera—from another table*]. Waiter, I'd like to have you get my eggs. I've been sitting here quite a while.

WAITER. Yes, sare.

GERMAN TRAVELLER. Kellner, bezahlen! [*His voice is, like his moustache, stiff and brushed up at the ends. His figure also is stiff and his hair a little gray; clearly once, if not now, a colonel.*]

WAITER. Komm' gleich! [*The baby on the bundle wails. The mother takes it up to soothe it. A young, red-cheeked Dutchman at the fourth table stops eating and laughs.*]

AMERICAN. My eggs! Get a wiggle on you!

WAITER. Yes, sare. [*He rapidly recedes. A* LITTLE MAN *in a soft hat is seen to the right of the tables. He stands a moment looking after the hurrying* WAITER, *then seats himself at the fifth table.*]

ENGLISHMAN [*looking at his watch*]. Ten minutes more.

ENGLISHWOMAN. Bother!

AMERICAN [*addressing them*]. 'Pears as if they'd a prejudice against eggs here, anyway. [*The English look at him, but do not speak.*]

GERMAN [*in creditable English*]. In these places man can get nothing. [*The* WAITER *comes flying back with a compote for the* DUTCH YOUTH, *who pays.*]

GERMAN. Kellner, bezahlen!

WAITER. Eine Krone sechzig. [*The* GERMAN *pays.*]

AMERICAN [*rising and taking out his watch—blandly*]. See here! If I don't get my eggs before this watch ticks twenty, there'll be another waiter in heaven.

WAITER [*flying*]. Komm' gleich!

AMERICAN [*seeking sympathy*]. I'm gettin' kind of mad! [*The* ENGLISHMAN *halves his newspaper and hands the advertisement half to his wife. The* BABY *wails. The* MOTHER *rocks it. The* DUTCH YOUTH *stops eating and laughs. The* GERMAN *lights a cigarette. The* LITTLE MAN *sits motionless, nursing his hat. The* WAITER *comes flying back with the eggs and places them before the* AMERICAN.]

AMERICAN [*putting away his watch*]. Good! I don't like trouble. How much? [*He pays and eats. The* WAITER *stands a moment at the edge of the platform and passes his hand across his brow. The* LITTLE MAN *eyes him and speaks gently.*]

LITTLE MAN. Herr Ober! [*The* WAITER *turns.*] Might I have a glass of beer?

WAITER. Yes, sare.

LITTLE MAN. Thank you very much. [*The* WAITER *goes.*]

AMERICAN [*pausing in the deglutition of his eggs—affably*]. Pardon me, sir; I'd like to have you tell me why you called that little bit of a feller "Herr Ober." Reckon you would know what that means? Mr. Head Waiter.

LITTLE MAN. Yes, yes.

AMERICAN. I smile.

LITTLE MAN. Oughtn't I to call him that?

GERMAN [*abruptly*]. Nein—Kellner.

AMERICAN. Why, yes! Just "waiter." [*The* ENGLISHWOMAN *looks round her paper for a second. The* DUTCH YOUTH *stops eating and laughs. The* LITTLE MAN *gazes from face to face and nurses his hat.*]

LITTLE MAN. I didn't want to hurt his feelings.

GERMAN. Gott!

AMERICAN. In my country we're vurry democratic—but that's quite a proposition.

ENGLISHMAN [*handling coffee-pot, to his wife*]. More?

ENGLISHWOMAN. No, thanks.

GERMAN [*abruptly*]. These fellows—if you treat them in this manner, at once they take liberties. You see, you will not get your beer. [*As he speaks the* WAITER *returns, bringing the* LITTLE MAN'S *beer, then retires.*]

AMERICAN. That 'pears to be one up to democracy. [*To the* LITTLE MAN.] I judge you go in for brotherhood?

LITTLE MAN [*startled*]. Oh, no! I never——

AMERICAN. I take considerable stock in Leo Tolstoi myself. Grand man—grand-souled apparatus. But I guess you've got to pinch those waiters some to make 'em skip. [*To the* ENGLISH, *who have carelessly looked his way for a moment.*] You'll appreciate that, the way he acted about my eggs. [*The* ENGLISH *make faint motions with their chins, and avert their eyes. To the* WAITER, *who is*

standing at the door of the buffet.] Waiter! Flash of beer—jump, now!

WAITER. Komm' gleich!

GERMAN. Cigarren!

WAITER. Schön. [*He disappears.*]

AMERICAN [*affably—to the* LITTLE MAN]. Now, if I don't get that flash of beer quicker'n you got yours, I shall admire.

GERMAN [*abruptly*]. Tolstoi is nothing—nichts! No good! Ha?

AMERICAN [*relishing the approach of argument*]. Well, that is a matter of temperament. Now, I'm all for equality. See that poor woman there—vurry humble woman—there she sits among us with her baby. Perhaps you'd like to locate her somewhere else?

GERMAN [*shrugging*]. Tolstoi is sentimentalisch. Nietzsche is the true philosopher, the only one.

AMERICAN. Well, that's quite in the prospectus—vurry stimulating party—old Nietzsch—virgin mind. But give me Leo! [*He turns to the red-cheeked youth.*] What do you opine, sir? I guess by your labels, you'll be Dutch. Do they read Tolstoi in your country? [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs.*]

AMERICAN. That is a vurry luminous answer.

GERMAN. Tolstoi is nothing. Man should himself express. He must push—he must be strong.

AMERICAN. That is so. In Amurrica we believe in virility; we like a man to expand—to cultivate his soul. But we believe in brotherhood, too; we're

vurry democratic. We draw the line at niggers; but we aspire, we're vurry high-souled. Social barriers and distinctions we've not much use for.

ENGLISHMAN. Do you feel a draught?

ENGLISHWOMAN [*with a shiver of her shoulder toward the* AMERICAN]. I do—rather.

GERMAN. Wait! You are a young people.

AMERICAN. That is so; there are no flies on us. [*To the* LITTLE MAN, *who has been gazing eagerly from face to face.*] Say! I'd like to have you give us your sentiments in relation to the duty of man. [*The* LITTLE MAN *fidgets, and is about to open his mouth.*]

AMERICAN. For example—is it your opinion that we should kill off the weak and diseased, and all that can't jump around?

GERMAN [*nodding*]. Ja, ja! That is coming.

LITTLE MAN [*looking from face to face*]. They might be me. [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs.*]

AMERICAN [*reproving him with a look*]. That's true humility. 'Tisn't grammar. Now, here's a proposition that brings it nearer the bone: Would you step out of your way to help them when it was liable to bring you trouble?

GERMAN. Nein, nein! That is stupid.

LITTLE MAN [*eager but wistful*]. I'm afraid not. Of course one wants to——

GERMAN. Nein, nein! That is stupid! What is the duty?

LITTLE MAN. There was St. Francis d'Assisi and St. Julien l'Hospitalier, and——

AMERICAN. Vurry lofty dispositions. Guess

they died of them. [*He rises.*] Shake hands, sir —my name is—— [*He hands a card.*] I am an ice-machine maker. [*He shakes the* LITTLE MAN'S *hand.*] I like your sentiments—I feel kind of brotherly. [*Catching sight of the* WAITER *appearing in the doorway.*] Waiter, where to h—ll is that flash of beer?

GERMAN. Cigarren!

WAITER. Komm' gleich! [*He vanishes.*]

ENGLISHMAN [*consulting watch*]. Train's late.

ENGLISHWOMAN. Really! Nuisance! [*A station* POLICEMAN, *very square and uniformed, passes and repasses.*]

AMERICAN [*resuming his seat—to the* GERMAN]. Now, we don't have so much of that in Amurrica. Guess we feel more to trust in human nature.

GERMAN. Ah! ha! you will bresently find there is nothing in him but self.

LITTLE MAN [*wistfully*]. Don't you believe in human nature?

AMERICAN. Vurry stimulating question. That invites remark. [*He looks round for opinions. The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs.*]

ENGLISHMAN [*holding out his half of the paper to his wife*]. Swap! [*His wife swaps.*]

GERMAN. In human nature I believe so far as I can see him—no more.

AMERICAN. Now that 'pears to me kind o' blasphemy. I'm vurry idealistic; I believe in heroism. I opine there's not one of us settin' around here that's not a hero—give him the occasion.

LITTLE MAN. Oh! Do you believe that?

AMERICAN. Well! I judge a hero is just a person that'll help another at the expense of himself. That's a vurry simple definition. Take that poor woman there. Well, now, she's a heroine, I guess. She would die for her baby any old time.

GERMAN. Animals will die for their babies. That is nothing.

AMERICAN. Vurry true. I carry it further. I postulate we would all die for that baby if a locomotive was to trundle up right here and try to handle it. I'm an idealist. [*To the* GERMAN.] I guess *you* don't know how good you are. [*As the* GERMAN *is twisting up the ends of his moustache—to the* ENGLISHWOMAN.] I should like to have you express an opinion, ma'am. This is a high subject.

ENGLISHWOMAN. I beg your pardon.

AMERICAN. The English are vurry humanitarian; they have a vurry high sense of duty. So have the Germans, so have the Amurricans. [*To the* DUTCH YOUTH.] I judge even in your little country they have that. This is a vurry civilized epoch. It is an epoch of equality and high-toned ideals. [*To the* LITTLE MAN.] What is *your* nationality, sir?

LITTLE MAN. I'm afraid I'm nothing particular. My father was half-English and half-American, and my mother half-German and half-Dutch.

AMERICAN. My! That's a bit streaky, any old way. [*The* POLICEMAN *passes again.*] Now, I don't believe we've much use any more for those gentlemen in buttons, not amongst the civilized

peoples. We've grown kind of mild—we don't think of self as we used to do. [*The* WAITER *has appeared in the doorway.*]

GERMAN [*in a voice of thunder*]. Cigarren! Donnerwetter!

AMERICAN [*shaking his fist at the vanishing* WAITER]. That flash of beer!

WAITER. Komm' gleich!

AMERICAN. A little more, and he will join George Washington! I was about to remark when he intruded: The kingdom of Christ nowadays is quite a going concern. The Press is vurry enlightened. We are mighty near to universal brotherhood. The colonel here [*he indicates the* GERMAN], he doesn't know what a lot of stock he holds in that proposition. He is a man of blood and iron, but give him an opportunity to be magnanimous, and he'll be right there. Oh, sir! yes. [*The* GERMAN, *with a profound mixture of pleasure and cynicism, brushes up the ends of his moustache.*]

LITTLE MAN. I wonder. One wants to, but somehow——[*He shakes his head.*]

AMERICAN. You seem kind of skeery about that. You've had experience maybe. The flesh is weak. I'm an optimist—I think we're bound to make the devil hum in the near future. I opine we shall occasion a good deal of trouble to that old party. There's about to be a holocaust of selfish interests. We're out for high sacrificial business. The colonel there with old-man Nietzsch—he won't know himself. There's going to be a vurry sacred opportunity. [*As he speaks the voice of a* RAILWAY

OFFICIAL *is heard in the distance calling out in German. It approaches, and the words become audible.*]

GERMAN [*startled*]. Der Teufel! [*He gets up, and seizes the bag beside him. The* STATION OFFICIAL *has appeared, he stands for a moment casting his commands at the seated group. The* DUTCH YOUTH *also rises, and takes his coat and hat. The* OFFICIAL *turns on his heel and retires, still issuing directions.*]

ENGLISHMAN. What does he say?

GERMAN. Our drain has come in, de oder platform; only one minute we haf. [*All have risen in a fluster.*]

AMERICAN. Now, that's vurry provoking. I won't get that flash of beer. [*There is a general scurry to gather coats and hats and wraps, during which the lowly woman is seen making desperate attempts to deal with her baby and the two large bundles. Quite defeated, she suddenly puts all down, wrings her hands, and cries out: "Herr Jesu! Hilfe!" The flying procession turn their heads at that strange cry.*]

AMERICAN. What's that? Help? [*He continues to run. The* LITTLE MAN *spins round, rushes back, picks up baby and bundle on which it was seated.*]

LITTLE MAN. Come along, good woman, come along! [*The woman picks up the other bundle and they run. The* WAITER, *appearing in the doorway with the bottle of beer, watches with his tired smile.*]

SCENE II.—A second-class compartment of a corri-

dor carriage, in motion. In it are seated the ENGLISHMAN *and his wife, opposite each other at the corridor end, she with her face to the engine, he with his back. Both are somewhat protected from the rest of the travellers by newspapers. Next to her sits the* GERMAN, *and opposite him sits the* AMERICAN; *next the* AMERICAN *in one window corner is seated the* DUTCH YOUTH; *the other window corner is taken by the* GERMAN'S *bag. The silence is only broken by the slight rushing noise of the train's progression and the crackling of the English newspapers.*

AMERICAN [*turning to the* DUTCH YOUTH]. Guess I'd like that window raised; it's kind of chilly after that old run they gave us. [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs, and goes through the motions of raising the window. The English regard the operation with uneasy irritation. The* GERMAN *opens his bag, which reposes on the corner seat next him, and takes out a book.*]

AMERICAN. The Germans are great readers. Vurry stimulating practice. I read most anything myself! [*The* GERMAN *holds up the book so that the title may be read.*] "Don Quixote"—fine book. We Amurricans take considerable stock in old man Quixote. Bit of a wild-cat—but we don't laugh at him.

GERMAN. He is dead. Dead as a sheep. A good thing, too.

AMERICAN. In Amurrica we have still quite an amount of chivalry.

GERMAN. Chivalry is nothing—sentimentalisch. In modern days—no good. A man must push, he must pull.

AMERICAN. So you say. But I judge your form of chivalry is sacrifice to the state. We allow more freedom to the individual soul. Where there's something little and weak, we feel it kind of noble to give up to it. That way we feel elevated. [*As he speaks there is seen in the corridor doorway the* LITTLE MAN, *with the* WOMAN'S BABY *still on his arm and the bundle held in the other hand. He peers in anxiously. The* ENGLISH, *acutely conscious, try to dissociate themselves from his presence with their papers. The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs.*]

GERMAN. Ach! So!

AMERICAN. Dear me!

LITTLE MAN. Is there room? I can't find a seat.

AMERICAN. Why, yes! There's a seat for one.

LITTLE MAN [*depositing bundle outside, and heaving* BABY]. May I?

AMERICAN. Come right in! [*The* GERMAN *sulkily moves his bag. The* LITTLE MAN *comes in and seats himself gingerly.*]

AMERICAN. Where's the mother?

LITTLE MAN [*ruefully*]. Afraid she got left behind. [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs. The* ENGLISH *unconsciously emerge from their newspapers.*]

AMERICAN. My! That would appear to be quite a domestic incident. [*The* ENGLISHMAN *suddenly utters a profound "Ha! Ha!" and disappears behind his paper. And that paper and the one*

opposite are seen to shake, and little squirls and squeaks emerge.]

GERMAN. And you haf got her bundle, and her baby. Ha! [*He cackles dryly.*]

AMERICAN [*gravely*]. I smile. I guess Providence has played it pretty low down on you. I judge it's acted real mean. [*The* BABY *wails, and the* LITTLE MAN *jigs it with a sort of gentle desperation, looking apologetically from face to face. His wistful glance renews the fire of merriment wherever it alights. The* AMERICAN *alone preserves a gravity which seems incapable of being broken.*]

AMERICAN. Maybe you'd better get off right smart and restore that baby. There's nothing can act madder than a mother.

LITTLE MAN. Poor thing; yes! What she must be suffering! [*A gale of laughter shakes the carriage. The* ENGLISH *for a moment drop their papers, the better to indulge. The* LITTLE MAN *smiles a wintry smile.*]

AMERICAN [*in a lull*]. How did it eventuate?

LITTLE MAN. We got there just as the train was going to start; and I jumped, thinking I could help her up. But it moved too quickly, and—and—left her. [*The gale of laughter blows up again.*]

AMERICAN. Guess I'd have thrown the baby out.

LITTLE MAN. I was afraid the poor little thing might break. [*The* BABY *wails; the* LITTLE MAN *heaves it; the gale of laughter blows.*]

AMERICAN [*gravely*]. It's highly entertaining—not for the baby. What kind of an old baby is it, anyway? [*He sniffs.*] I judge it's a bit—niffy.

LITTLE MAN. Afraid I've hardly looked at it yet.

AMERICAN. Which end up is it?

LITTLE MAN. Oh! I think the right end. Yes, yes, it is.

AMERICAN. Well, that's something. Guess I should hold it out of winder a bit. Vurry excitable things, babies!

ENGLISHWOMAN [*galvanized*]. No, no!

ENGLISHMAN [*touching her knee*]. My dear!

AMERICAN. You are right, ma'am. I opine there's a draught out there. This baby is precious. We've all of us got stock in this baby in a manner of speaking. This is a little bit of universal brotherhood. Is it a woman baby?

LITTLE MAN. I—I can only see the top of its head.

AMERICAN. You can't always tell from that. It looks kind of over-wrapped up. Maybe it had better be unbound.

GERMAN. Nein, nein, nein!

AMERICAN. I think you are vurry likely right, colonel. It might be a pity to unbind that baby. I guess the lady should be consulted in this matter.

ENGLISHWOMAN. Yes, yes, of course—I——

ENGLISHMAN [*touching her*]. Let it be! Little beggar seems all right.

AMERICAN. That would seem only known to Providence at this moment. I judge it might be due to humanity to look at its face.

LITTLE MAN [*gladly*]. It's sucking my finger. There, there—nice little thing—there!

AMERICAN. I would surmise you have created babies in your leisure moments, sir?

LITTLE MAN. Oh! no—indeed, no.

AMERICAN. Dear me! That is a loss. [*Addressing himself to the carriage at large.*] I think we may esteem ourselves fortunate to have this little stranger right here with us; throws a vurry tender and beautiful light on human nature. Demónstrates what a hold the little and weak have upon us nowadays. The colonel here—a man of blood and iron—there he sits quite ca'm next door to it. [*He sniffs.*] Now, this baby is ruther chastening—that is a sign of grace, in the colonel—that is true heroism.

LITTLE MAN [*faintly*]. I—I can see its face a little now. [*All bend forward.*]

AMERICAN. What sort of a physiognomy has it, anyway?

LITTLE MAN [*still faintly*]. I don't see anything but—but spots.

GERMAN. Oh! Ha! Pfui! [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs.*]

AMERICAN. I am told that is not uncommon amongst babies. Perhaps we could have you inform us, ma'am.

ENGLISHWOMAN. Yes, of course—only—what sort of——

LITTLE MAN. They seem all over its—— [*At the slight recoil of everyone*] I feel sure it's—it's quite a good baby underneath.

AMERICAN. That will be ruther difficult to come at. I'm just a bit sensitive. I've vurry little use for affections of the epidermis.

GERMAN. Pfui! [*He has edged away as far as*

he can get, and is lighting a big cigar. The DUTCH YOUTH *draws his legs back.*]

AMERICAN [*also taking out a cigar*]. I guess it would be well to fumigate this carriage. Does it suffer, do you think?

LITTLE MAN [*peering*]. Really, I don't—I'm not sure—I know so little about babies. I think it would have a nice expression—if—if it showed.

AMERICAN. Is it kind of boiled-looking?

LITTLE MAN. Yes—yes, it is.

AMERICAN [*looking gravely round*]. I judge this baby has the measles. [*The* GERMAN *screws himself spasmodically against the arm of the* ENGLISHWOMAN'S *seat.*]

ENGLISHWOMAN. Poor little thing! Shall I——? [*She half-rises.*]

ENGLISHMAN [*touching her*]. No, no—— Dash it!

AMERICAN. I honour your emotion, ma'am. It does credit to us all. But I sympathize with your husband, too. The measles is a vurry important pestilence in connection with a grown woman.

LITTLE MAN. It likes my finger awfully. Really, it's rather a sweet baby.

AMERICAN [*sniffing*]. Well, that would appear to be quite a question. About them spots, now? Are they rosy?

LITTLE MAN. No—o; they're dark, almost black.

GERMAN. Gott! Typhus! [*He bounds up onto the arm of the* ENGLISHWOMAN'S *seat.*]

AMERICAN. Typhus! That's quite an indisposition! [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *rises suddenly, and bolts out into the corridor. He is followed by the* GERMAN, *puffing clouds of smoke. The* ENGLISH *and* AMERICAN *sit a moment longer without speaking. The* ENGLISHWOMAN'S *face is turned with a curious expression—half-pity, half-fear—toward the* LITTLE MAN. *Then the* ENGLISHMAN *gets up.*]

ENGLISHMAN. Bit stuffy for you here, dear, isn't it? [*He puts his arm through hers, raises her, and almost pushes her through the doorway. She goes, still looking back.*]

AMERICAN [*gravely*]. There's nothing I admire more'n courage. Guess I'll go and smoke in the corridor. [*As he goes out the* LITTLE MAN *looks very wistfully after him. Screwing up his mouth and nose, he holds the* BABY *away from him and wavers; then rising, he puts it on the seat opposite and goes through the motions of letting down the window. Having done so he looks at the* BABY, *who has begun to wail. Suddenly he raises his hands and clasps them, like a child praying. Since, however, the* BABY *does not stop wailing, he hovers over it in indecision; then, picking it up, sits down again to dandle it, with his face turned toward the open window. Finding that it still wails, he begins to sing to it in a cracked little voice. It is charmed at once. While he is singing, the* AMERICAN *appears in the corridor. Letting down the passage window, he stands there in the doorway with the draught blowing his hair and the smoke of his cigar all about him. The* LITTLE MAN *stops singing and shifts the shawl*

higher, to protect the BABY'S *head from the draught.*]

AMERICAN [*gravely*]. This is the most sublime spectacle I have ever envisaged. There ought to be a récord of this. [*The* LITTLE MAN *looks at him, wondering.*] We have here a most stimulating epitome of our marvellous advance toward universal brotherhood. You are typical, sir, of the sentiments of modern Christianity. You illústrate the deepest feelings in the heart of every man. [*The* LITTLE MAN *rises with the* BABY *and a movement of approach.*] Guess I'm wanted in the dining car. [*He vanishes. The* LITTLE MAN *sits down again, but back to the engine, away from the draught, and looks out of the window, patiently jogging the* BABY *on his knee.*]

SCENE III.—An arrival platform. The LITTLE MAN, *with the* BABY *and the bundle, is standing disconsolate, while travellers pass and luggage is being carried by. A* STATION OFFICIAL, *accompanied by a* POLICEMAN, *appears from a doorway, behind him.*

OFFICIAL [*consulting telegram in his hand*]. Das ist der Herr. [*They advance to the* LITTLE MAN.]

OFFICIAL. Sie haben einen Buben gestohlen?

LITTLE MAN. I only speak English and American.

OFFICIAL. Dies ist nicht Ihr Bube? [*He touches the* BABY.]

LITTLE MAN [*shaking his head*]. Take care—it's ill. [*The man does not understand.*] Ill—the baby——

OFFICIAL [*shaking his head*]. Verstehe nicht. Dis is nod your baby? No?

LITTLE MAN [*shaking his head violently*]. No, it is not. No.

OFFICIAL [*tapping the telegram*]. Gut! You are 'rested. [*He signs to the* POLICEMAN, *who takes the* LITTLE MAN'S *arm.*]

LITTLE MAN. Why? I don't want the poor baby.

OFFICIAL [*lifting the bundle*]. Dies ist nicht Ihr Gepäck—pag?

LITTLE MAN. No.

OFFICIAL. Gut. You are 'rested.

LITTLE MAN. I only took it for the poor woman. I'm not a thief—I'm—I'm——

OFFICIAL [*shaking head*]. Verstehe nicht. [*The* LITTLE MAN *tries to tear his hair. The disturbed* BABY *wails.*]

LITTLE MAN [*dandling it as best he can*]. There, there—poor, poor!

OFFICIAL. Halt still! You are 'rested. It is all right.

LITTLE MAN. Where is the mother?

OFFICIAL. She komm by next drain. Das telegram say: Halt einen Herrn mit schwarzem Buben and schwarzem Gepäck. 'Rest gentleman mit black baby und black—pag. [*The* LITTLE MAN *turns up his eyes to heaven.*]

OFFICIAL. Komm mit us. [*They take the* LITTLE MAN *toward the door from which they have come. A voice stops them.*]

AMERICAN [*speaking from as far away as may be*].

Just a moment! [*The* OFFICIAL *stops; the* LITTLE MAN *also stops and sits down on a bench against the wall. The* POLICEMAN *stands stolidly beside him. The* AMERICAN *approaches a step or two, beckoning; the* OFFICIAL *goes up to him.*]

AMERICAN. Guess you've got an angel from heaven there! What's the gentleman in buttons for?

OFFICIAL. Was ist das?

AMERICAN. Is there anybody here that can understand Amurrican?

OFFICIAL. Verstehe nicht.

AMERICAN. Well, just watch my gestures. I was saying [*he points to the* LITTLE MAN, *then makes gestures of flying*], you have an angel from heaven there. You have there a man in whom Gawd [*he points upward*] takes quite an amount of stock. This is a vurry precious man. You have no call to arrest him [*he makes the gestures of arrest*]. No, sir. Providence has acted pretty mean, loading off that baby on him [*he makes the motion of dandling*]. The little man has a heart of gold. [*He points to his heart, and takes out a gold coin.*]

OFFICIAL [*thinking he is about to be bribed*]. Aber, das ist *zu* viel!

AMERICAN. Now, don't rattle me! [*Pointing to the* LITTLE MAN.] Man [*pointing to his heart*] Herz [*pointing to the coin*] von Gold. This is a flower of the field—he don't want no gentleman in buttons to pluck him up. [*A little crowd is gathering, including the two* ENGLISH, *the* GERMAN, *and the* DUTCH YOUTH.]

OFFICIAL. Verstehe absolut nichts. [*He taps the telegram.*] Ich muss mein duty do.

AMERICAN. But I'm telling you. This is a good man. This is probably the best man on Gawd's airth.

OFFICIAL. Das macht nichts—gut or no gut, I muss mein duty do. [*He turns to go toward the* LITTLE MAN.]

AMERICAN. Oh! Vurry well, arrest him; do your duty. This baby has typhus. [*At the word "typhus" the* OFFICIAL *stops.*]

AMERICAN [*making gestures*]. First-class typhus, black typhus, schwarzen typhus. Now you have it. I'm kind o' sorry for you and the gentleman in buttons. Do your duty!

OFFICIAL. Typhus? Der Bub'—die baby hat typhus?

AMERICAN. I'm telling you.

OFFICIAL. Gott im Himmel!

AMERICAN [*spotting the* GERMAN *in the little throng*]. Here's a gentleman will corroborate me.

OFFICIAL [*much disturbed, and signing to the* POLICEMAN *to stand clear*]. Typhus! Aber das ist grässlich!

AMERICAN. I kind o' thought you'd feel like that.

OFFICIAL. Die Sanitätsmachine! Gleich! [*A* PORTER *goes to get it. From either side the broken half-moon of persons stand gazing at the* LITTLE MAN, *who sits unhappily dandling the* BABY *in the centre.*]

OFFICIAL [*raising his hands*]. Was zu thun?

AMERICAN. Guess you'd better isolate the baby. [*A silence, during which the* LITTLE MAN *is heard faintly whistling and clucking to the* BABY.]

OFFICIAL [*referring once more to his telegram*]. 'Rest gentleman mit black baby. [*Shaking his head*] Wir must de gentleman hold. [*To the* GERMAN] Bitte, mein Herr, sagen Sie ihm, den Buben zu niedersetzen. [*He makes the gesture of deposit.*]

GERMAN [*to the* LITTLE MAN]. He say: Put down the baby. [*The* LITTLE MAN *shakes his head and continues to dandle the* BABY.]

OFFICIAL. Sie müssen—you must. [*The* LITTLE MAN *glowers, in silence.*]

ENGLISHMAN [*in background—muttering*]. Good man!

GERMAN. His spirit ever denies; er will nicht.

OFFICIAL [*again making his gesture*]. Aber er muss! [*The* LITTLE MAN *makes a face at him*]. Sag' ihm: Instantly put down baby, and komm mit us. [*The* BABY *wails.*]

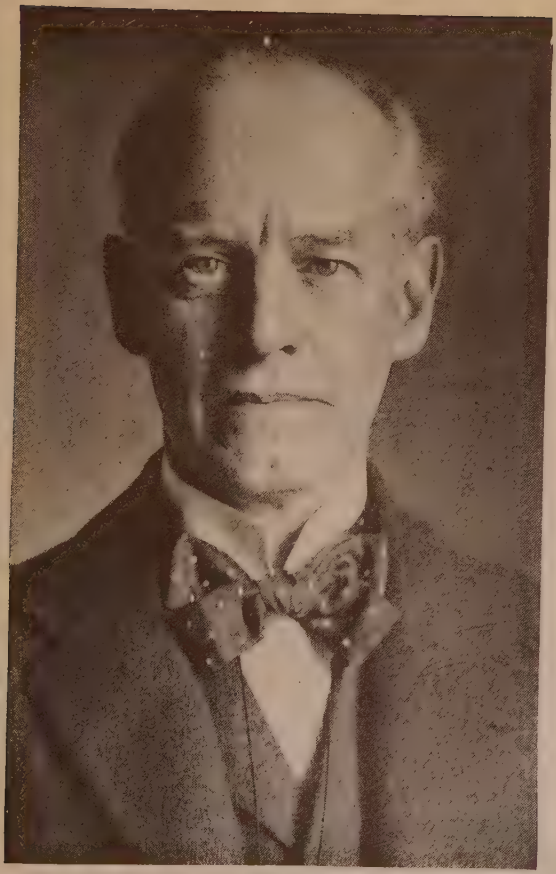
LITTLE MAN. Leave the poor ill baby here alone? Be-be-be d—d first!

AMERICAN [*jumping onto a trunk—with enthusiasm*]. Bully! [*The* ENGLISH *clap their hands; the* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs. The* OFFICIAL *is muttering, greatly incensed.*]

AMERICAN. What does that body-snatcher say?

GERMAN. He say this man use the baby to save himself from arrest. Very smart—he say.

AMERICAN. I judge you do him an injustice. [*Showing off the* LITTLE MAN *with a sweep of his*



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JOHN GALSWORTHY

arm.] This is a vurry white man. He's got a black baby, and he won't leave it in the lurch. Guess we would all act noble, that way, give us the chance. [*The* LITTLE MAN *rises, holding out the* BABY, *and advances a step or two. The half-moon at once gives, increasing its size; the* AMERICAN *climbs onto a higher trunk. The* LITTLE MAN *retires and again sits down.*

AMERICAN [*addressing the* OFFICIAL]. Guess you'd better go out of business and wait for the mother.

OFFICIAL [*stamping his foot*]. Die Mutter sall 'rested be for taking out baby mit typhus. Ha! [*To the* LITTLE MAN.] Put ze baby down! [*The* LITTLE MAN *smiles.*] Do you 'ear?

AMERICAN [*addressing the* OFFICIAL]. Now, see here. 'Pears to me you don't suspicion just how beautiful this is. Here we have a man giving his life for that old baby that's got no claim on him. This is not a baby of his own making. No, sir, this a vurry Christ-like proposition in the gentleman.

OFFICIAL. Put ze baby down, or ich will gommand someone it to do.

AMERICAN. That will be vurry interesting to watch.

OFFICIAL [*to* POLICEMAN]. Nehmen Sie den Buben. Dake it vrom him. [*The* POLICEMAN *mutters, but does not.*]

AMERICAN [*to the* GERMAN]. Guess I lost that.

GERMAN. He say he is not his officer.

AMERICAN. That just tickles me to death.

OFFICIAL [*looking round*]. Vill nobody dake ze Bub'?

ENGLISHWOMAN [*moving a step—faintly*]. Yes—I——

ENGLISHMAN [*grasping her arm*]. By Jove! Will you!

OFFICIAL [*gathering himself for a great effort to take the* BABY, *and advancing two steps*]. Zen I gommand you—— [*He stops and his voice dies away.*] Zit dere!

AMERICAN. My! That's wonderful. What a man this is! What a sublime sense of duty! [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs. The* OFFICIAL *turns on him, but as he does so the* MOTHER *of the* BABY *is seen hurrying.*]

MOTHER. Ach! Ach! Mei' Bubi! [*Her face is illumined; she is about to rush to the* LITTLE MAN.]

OFFICIAL [*to the* POLICEMAN]. Nimm die Frau! [*The* POLICEMAN *catches hold of the* WOMAN.]

OFFICIAL [*to the frightened* WOMAN]. Warum haben Sie einen Buben mit Typhus mit ausgebracht?

AMERICAN [*eagerly, from his perch*]. What was that? I don't want to miss any.

GERMAN. He say: Why did you a baby with typhus with you bring out?

AMERICAN. Well, that's quite a question. [*He takes out the field-glasses slung around him and adjusts them on the* BABY.]

MOTHER [*bewildered*]. Mei' Bubi—Typhus—aber Typhus? [*She shakes her head violently.*] Nein, nein, nein! Typhus!

OFFICIAL. Er hat Typhus.

MOTHER [*shaking her head*]. Nein, nein, nein!

AMERICAN [*looking through his glasses*]. Guess she's kind of right! I judge the typhus is where the baby's slobbered on the shawl, and it's come off on him. [*The* DUTCH YOUTH *laughs.*]

OFFICIAL [*turning on him furiously*]. Er hat Typhus.

AMERICAN. Now, that's where you slop over. Come right here. [*The* OFFICIAL *mounts, and looks through the glasses.*]

AMERICAN [*to the* LITTLE MAN]. Skin out the baby's leg. If we don't locate spots on that, it'll be good enough for me. [*The* LITTLE MAN *fumbles out the* BABY'S *little white foot.*]

MOTHER. Mei' Bubi! [*She tries to break away.*]

AMERICAN. White as a banana. [*To the* OFFICIAL—*affably.*] Guess you've made kind of a fool of us with your old typhus.

OFFICIAL. Lass die Frau! [*The* POLICEMAN *lets her go, and she rushes to her* BABY.]

MOTHER. Mei' Bubi! [*The* BABY, *exchanging the warmth of the* LITTLE MAN *for the momentary chill of its* MOTHER, *wails.*]

OFFICIAL [*descending and beckoning to the* POLICEMAN]. Sie wollen den Herrn accusiren? [*The* POLICEMAN *takes the* LITTLE MAN'S *arm.*]

AMERICAN. What's that? They goin' to pinch him after all? [*The* MOTHER, *still hugging her* BABY, *who has stopped crying, gazes at the* LITTLE MAN, *who sits dazedly looking up. Suddenly she drops on her knees, and with her free hand lifts his booted foot and kisses it.*]

AMERICAN [*waving his hat*]. 'Ra! 'Ra! [*He descends swiftly, goes up to the* LITTLE MAN, *whose arm the* POLICEMAN *has dropped, and takes his hand.*] Brother, I am proud to know you. This is one of the greatest moments I have ever experienced. [*Displaying the* LITTLE MAN *to the assembled company.*] I think I sense the situation when I say that we all esteem it an honour to breathe the rather inferior atmosphere of this station here along with our little friend. I guess we shall all go home and treasure the memory of his face as the whitest thing in our museum of recollections. And perhaps this good woman will also go home and wash the face of our little brother here. I am inspired with a new faith in mankind. We can all be proud of this mutual experience; we have our share in it; we can kind of feel noble. Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to present to you a sure-enough saint —only wants a halo, to be transfigured. [*To the* LITTLE MAN] Stand right up. [*The* LITTLE MAN *stands up bewildered. They come about him. The* OFFICIAL *bows to him, the* POLICEMAN *salutes him.* THE DUTCH YOUTH *shakes his head and laughs. The* GERMAN *draws himself up very straight, and bows quickly twice. The* ENGLISHMAN *and his wife approach at least two steps, then, thinking better of it, turn to each other and recede. The* MOTHER *kisses his hand. The* PORTER *returning with the Sanitätsmachine, turns it on from behind, and its pinkish shower, goldened by a ray of sunlight, falls around the* LITTLE MAN'S *head, transfiguring it as he stands with eyes upraised to see whence the portent comes.*]

AMERICAN [*rushing forward and dropping on his knees*]. Hold on just a minute! Guess I'll take a snap-shot of the miracle. [*He adjusts his pocket camera.*] This ought to look bully!

[THE CURTAIN]

THE JUDGMENT OF INDRA

BY

DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI

THE JUDGMENT OF INDRA*

CAST

SHUKRA.
SHANTA.
KANADA.
AN OLD MAN.

[*TIME: The Fifteenth Century.*]

[*PLACE: A Monastery on one of the foothills of Himalaya.*]

[*SCENE: In the foreground is the outer court of a monastery. In the centre of the court is a sacred plant, growing out of a small altar of earth about two feet square. On the left of the court is a sheer precipice, adown which a flight of stone steps—only a few of which are visible—connects the monastery with the village in the valley below.*

To the right are the temple and the adobe walls and the roof of the monastery cells. There is a

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little space between the temple and the adobe walls which is the passage leading to the inner recesses of the monastery. Several steps lead to the doors of the temple, which give on the court. In the distance, rear, are the snowy peaks of the Himalayas, glowing under the emerald sky of an Indian afternoon. To the left, the distances stretch into vast spaces of wooded hills. Long bars of light glimmer and die as the vast clouds, with edges of crimson, golden and silver, spread portentously over the hills and forest.

A roll of thunder in the distance accompanies the rise of the curtain.]

SHANTA. [*He is reading a palm-leaf manuscript near the Sacred Plant. He looks up at the sky.*] It forbodes a calamity.

[*Suddenly the Temple doors open.* SHUKRA *stands framed in the doorway. Seeing that* SHANTA *is alone,* SHUKRA *walks down the steps toward him.*]

SHUKRA. Are you able to make out the words?

SHANTA. Aye, Master.

SHUKRA. Where is Kanada?

SHANTA. He will be here presently. Listen, master: it sayeth: "Only a hair's breadth divides the true from the false. Upon him who by thought, word, or deed confuses the two, will descend the Judgment of Indra."

SHUKRA. The thunder of Indra is just. It will strike the erring and the unrighteous no matter where they hide themselves; in the heart of the

forest or in the silence of the cloisters, Indra's Judgment will descend on them. Even the erring heart that knows not that it is erring will be smitten and chastized by Indra. [*Thunder rumbles in the distance.*]

SHANTA. Master, when you speak, you not only fill the heart with ecstasy, but also the soul with the beauty of truth.

SHUKRA. To praise is good. But why praise me, who have yet to find God and—— [*Shakes his head sadly.*]

SHANTA. You will find Him soon; your time is nigh.

SHUKRA. I wish it were true.

SHANTA. Master, if there be anything that I can do for you. If I could only lighten your burden a little——

SHUKRA. Thou hast done that already. All the cares of the monastery thou hast taken from me. Thou hast bound me to thee by bonds of gratitude that can never break. [*Enter* KANADA.] Ah, Kanada, how be it with you to-day? [*Coming to him.*]

KANADA. [*He is a lad of twenty and two.*] By your blessing I am well and at peace. Have you finished your meditation?

SHUKRA. [*Sadly*] Nine hours have I meditated, but—I shall say the prayers now. [*Enters the temple and shuts the door.*]

KANADA. He seems not to be himself.

SHANTA. When he is in meditation for a long time, he becomes another being.

KANADA. There is sadness in his eyes.

SHANTA. How can he be sad—he who has risen above joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, hate and love?

KANADA. Above love, too?

SHANTA. Yea, hate and love being opposite, are Maya, illusion!

KANADA. Yet we must love the world.

SHANTA. Yea, that we do to help the world.

KANADA. The Master is tender to the villagers even if they lead the worldly life.

SHANTA. We be monks. We have broken all the ties of the world, even those of family, so that we can bestow our thoughts, care, and love upon all the children of God. Our love is impartial. [*The thunder growls in the distance.*]

KANADA. Yea, that is the truth. Yet I think the Master loves thee more than any other.

SHANTA. Nay, brother. He loves no one more than another. I have been with him ten years; that makes him depend on me. But if the truth were known—he loves none. For he loves all. Indra, be my witness: the Master loveth no one more than another.

KANADA. Ah, noble-souled Master! Yet I feel happy to think that he loveth thee more than any.

SHANTA. He loves each living creature. He is not as the worldly ones who love by comparison—this one more, the other less. Last night, as the rain wailed without like a heart-broken woman, how his voice rose in song of light and love! He is

one of God's prophets, and a true singer of His praise.

KANADA. I can hear him yet.

SHANTA. I will never forget the ineffable joy that glowed in his words. Only he who has renounced all ties, can speak with such deep and undying love. No anxiety——

KANADA. It was that of which I would speak to thee. Dost thou not see sadness and anxiety in the Master's face?

SHANTA. He is deep in thought—naught else.

KANADA. Ever since that message was brought him the other day, he has seemed heavy hearted. It was melancholy tidings.

SHANTA. Nay, that message had naught to do with him. [*Thunder growls. The Temple doors open.* SHUKRA *comes out of the Temple and shuts the doors behind him. Then he stands still in front of the temple.*

SHUKRA [*calling*]. Kanada.

KANADA. Yea, Master. [*He goes up to* SHUKRA, *who gives him some directions.* KANADA *exits;* SHUKRA *stands looking at the sky.*]

SHANTA. How wonderful a vision he is! As he stands at the threshold of the temple he seems like a new God, another divinity come down to earth to lead the righteous on to the realms celestial. Ah, Master, how grateful am I to have thee as my teacher! I thank Brahma for giving thee to me.

[*Enter* KANADA. SHUKRA *then walks to* SHANTA, *with* KANADA *following him.*]

KANADA. Master, all is ready.

SHUKRA. Go ye to the village; ask them if all be well with them. When the heavens are unkind —ah, if it rains another day all the crops will be destroyed. What will they live on? No, no, it cannot be. Go ye both down to them and take them my blessings: Tell them we will make another offering to Indra to-night. It must not rain any more.

SHANTA. Bring out begging bowls, KANADA.

KANADA. Shall I bring the torches, too? [*Crossing.*]

SHUKRA. The clouds may hide the moon; yea, the torches, too. [KANADA *exits R.*]

SHUKRA. Yea. [*Thunder growls above head.*] The storm grows apace. I hope thou wilt find shelter ere it breaks. [*A short silence.*] The world is growing darker and darker each day. Sin and Vice are gathering around it like a vast coiling Serpent. We monks be the only ones that can save it and set it free. Shanta, be steadfast; strengthen me. Help me to bring the light to the world. Thou art not only my disciple, but my friend and brother. [*He embraces* SHANTA.] Save me from the world.

KANADA [*entering*]. Here be—— [*Stops in surprise.*]

SHUKRA. [*Releasing* SHANTA]. Come to me, Kanada. [*The latter does so,* SHUKRA *putting an arm around* KANADA'S *neck*]. Little Brother——

KANADA [*radiantly*]. Master——

SHUKRA. Be brave and free—free from the delusions of this world, Sansara. Go yet to the

village; take them our blessings! Hari be with them all! May ye return hither safely. [*Thunder and lightning.*] Ah, Lord Indra!—— Look, it is raining yonder. Go, hasten——

SHANTA. [*Taking a begging bowl and torch from* KANADA]. Come!

SHUKRA [*putting his hands on their heads*]. I bless ye both. May Indra protect ye—— [*The rest of his words are drowned by the lightning flash and peal of thunder*].

[*The two disciples intone:* "OM Shanti OM." *They go down the steps.*]

SHUKRA. May this storm pass. OM Shiva. Shiva love you, my Shanta. For ten long years he has been with me; he has greatly helped me in my search after Him who is the only living Reality. To-day I am nearer God—I stand at the threshold of realization. I seem to feel that it will not be long before the Veil will be lifted and I shall press my heart against the heart of the ultimate mystery—— Who comes there? [*Listens attentively.*] They cannot have gone and come back so soon. Ha! another illusion! These days I am beset by endless illusions. Perhaps that betokens the end of my search, as the gloom is always thickest ere the dawn. Yea, after this will come the Light; I will see God! [*Hears a noise; listens attentively.*] Are they already returning? [*Calling*] Shanta! [*He crosses and looks down. Thunder rolls very loudly now. He does not heed that. Suddenly he recoils in agitation. Footsteps are heard from below, rising higher and higher.* SHUKRA *rubs his eyes to make*

sure that he has really seen something that is not an illusion. He goes forward a few steps. The head of an old man rises into view, SHUKRA *is stupefied; walks backwards until his back touches the Sacred Plant. He stands still. The old man at last climbs the last step. He has not noticed* SHUKRA. *He looks at the Himalayas in the rear. Then his eyes travel over the monastery walls—— Now suddenly they catch sight of* SHUKRA.]

SHUKRA. What seek ye here?

OLD MAN [*eyeing him carefully*]. Ah, Shukra! dost thou not recognize thine aged father? [*He goes to* SHUKRA *with outstretched arms.*]

SHUKRA. I have no father.

OLD MAN. But I am thy father. Did not my messenger come the other day? [*Silence.*] Did he lie to me? Dost thou not know thy mother is——

SHUKRA. Thy messenger came.

OLD MAN. Then come thou home at once There is not time to be lost. Come, my son, ere thy mother leaves this earth.

SHUKRA. I cannot go.

OLD MAN. Thou canst not go? Dost thou not know that thy mother is on her death-bed?

SHUKRA. I have renounced the world. For twelve years I have had no father nor mother.

OLD MAN. Thou didst leave us, but we did not renounce thee. And now thou shouldst come.

SHUKRA. I told thy messenger that I have no father nor mother—I cannot come.

OLD MAN. I heard it all. If thou art born of us,

thou canst not have a heart of stone? Come, my son: I, thy father, implore thee.

SHUKRA. Nay, nay; God alone is my father.

OLD MAN. Hath it not been said in the Scriptures that thy parents are thy God? Thy father should be obeyed.

SHUKRA. That was said by one who had not seen the Truth, the Light.

OLD MAN. I command thee in the name of the Scriptures.

SHUKRA. God alone can command me.

OLD MAN. Vishnu protect me! Art thou dreaming, my child? Yonder lies thy mother, fighting death——

SHUKRA. I have heard it all.

OLD MAN. And yet thou wilt not go?

SHUKRA. Nay, father, I cannot go! The day I took the vow of a monk, that day I cut the bond that binds me to you all. I must be free of all ties. I must love none for myself that I may love all for God. Here I must remain where God has placed me, until He calls me elsewhere.

OLD MAN. But thy mother lies, fighting with each breath. She wishes to see thee.

SHUKRA. I cannot come.

OLD MAN. But thou must.

SHUKRA. I would if I could; but my life is in the hands of God.

OLD MAN [*mocking*]. God! Thy life belongs to God? Who gave thee life? Not God, but she who lies there dying; what ingratitude! This, indeed, is the age of darkness; sons are turning

against their fathers — and killing their own mother.

SHUKRA [*quietly*]. I may not love one more than another; my steps, as my heart, go whither God guides them.

OLD MAN [*mocking*]. Truth is thy witness?

SHUKRA. May Indra himself punish me if I love one more than another. Hear me, Indra. [*The roll of thunder above.*]

OLD MAN [*in desperation*]. Come, my son, in the name of thine own God I pray to thee, come to thy mother. I kneel at thy feet and beg for this boon. [*He does so.*]

SHUKRA [*raises him to his feet. He puts his own head down on the old man's feet.*]

OLD MAN. Then thou comest? [SHUKRA *rises to his feet.*]

SHUKRA [*hesitating*]. There is a law in the Sacred Books that says an ascetic should see the place of his birth every twelfth year.

OLD MAN. And it is twelve years now since thou didst renounce us! Ah! blessed be the law.

SHUKRA. Yet, father, if I go, I go not in obedience to the law, but since the desire to see my mother is uppermost in me, I who dreamt not of the law hitherto—yea, now I hasten to abide by the law. Ah, what mockery! It is not the letter of the law, but the spirit in us that judges us sinners or saints. Now if I go with thee to obey the law, that would be betraying the law.

OLD MAN. Betraying the law!

SHUKRA. Thought alone is the measure of our

innocence. He who thinks evil is a doer of evil indeed. Nay, nay, tempt me not with the law. I must remain here. I must keep my vow. [*He looks up to heaven; it is covered with enormous black clouds.*]

OLD MAN. The law is not written in the heavens. It is inscribed in the heart of man. Obey the dictates of thy heart.

SHUKRA. God alone shall be obeyed. I cannot betray His command. I, who am an ascetic, must not yield to the desire to see my mother—— Nay! God——

OLD MAN. What manner of God is He that deprives a dying mother of her son? Such a God never was known in Hindu life. No such God lives nor breathes. [*Thunder and lightning.*]

SHUKRA. Erring Soul, do not blaspheme your creator. He is the God of Truth—God of Love.

OLD MAN [*disdainfully*]. God of Love—— How can He be God of Love if He dries up the stream of thy heart and blinds thy reason as the clouds blind the eyes of the Sun? Nay, thou liest. It is not the God of Love, but the God of thine insane self—self-love that makes thee rob thy mother of her only joy in life. I—yea, I will answer to God for thee. If, by coming to see thy mother, thou sinnest, I ask God to make me pay for thy sin. Come, obey thy father—I will take the burden of thy sin, if sin it be.

SHUKRA. Nay, each man pays for his sins as each man reaps the harvest of his own good deeds. None can atone for another. Ah, God! cursed be the hour when I was born. Cursed——

OLD MAN [*angrily*]. Thou cursest thy birth?

SHUKRA. Yea, to be born in this world of woe is a curse indeed.

OLD MAN. Then curse thy tormented mind and thy desolate heart; curse not——

SHUKRA. Nay, I curse the hour that saw me come to this earth of delusion and Maya. I do curse——

OLD MAN. Thou dost dare curse the hour when thou wert born! Ah, vile sinner! To curse the hour of thy birth when thy mother is dying! God be my witness, he has incurred his father's wrath. Now, no God can save thee.

SHUKRA. Nay, nay——

OLD MAN. Shukra. I, thy father, thy God in life, curse thee. Thou hast deprived thy mother of her child, and her death of its solace. Thou hast incurred the wrath of the Spirits of all thy departed ancestors.

SHUKRA [*cries out*]. Not thus; not thus. [*Thunder and lightning, the whole sky is swept by the clouds.*]

OLD MAN. Not thus? Thus alone shall it be. Cursed be thou at night; cursed be thou by day; cursed be thou going; cursed be thou coming. Thou art cursed by the spirit of the race, by the spirit of God. [*Continued thunder and lightning.*]

SHUKRA [*falling at his father's feet*]. I beseech thee, my father——

OLD MAN [*shrinking away*]. Touch me not. [*Going left.*] Cursed art thou in Life and Death forever.

SHUKRA. God!—— Father, go not thus.

OLD MAN. I am not thy father. [*Deafening and blinding thunder and lightning.*]

SHUKRA. Father——

OLD MAN [*going down the steps*]. Pollute not my hearing by calling me thy father. May the judgment of Indra be upon thee! [*He totters down out of sight, left, in anger and horror.*]

SHUKRA. Father, hear, oh hear! [*The rain comes down in a deluge; thunder and lightning. The rain blots everything out of sight. It pours in deep, dark sheets, through which the chains and sheets of lightning burn and run. After raining awhile, the sky clears. In the pale moonlight,* SHUKRA *is seen crouching near the Sacred Plant. He is wet and dishevelled. He slowly rises, swaying in exhaustion. Voices are heard below.*]

SHUKRA. Can it be that it is over? Has Indra judged me and found me free of error? Yea, were I in error, the lightning would have struck me. I lay there blinded by rain awaiting my death. It did not come. Yea, Indra has judged! [*Noises below; he does not hear.*] O, thou shadowy world, I am free of thee at last. Free of love and loving, free of all bondage. I have no earthly ties—I lean on God alone. At last, I am bound to no earthly being, not even—[*strange pause*]—not even —Shanta. [*He becomes conscious of the noise of approaching footsteps and the light of the torches from below.*] Who is that? [*He goes forward a few steps. Enter* KANADA, *torch in hand.*]

KANADA. Master, Master.

SHUKRA. Kanada, thou——[*a pause, very brief but poignant*]. Why this agitation? Shanta, where is Shanta?

KANADA. Shanta is——

SHUKRA [*seeing the other torches rising suddenly*]. Speak! Who comes hither?

KANADA. They bring a dead man.

SHUKRA. Who is he? [*As a premonition of the truth comes over him*] Where is Shanta?

KANADA [*blurts out*]. At the foot of the hill the lightning struck him.

SHUKRA [*with a terrible cry*]. Shanta—my Shanta! [*Two men carrying torches with one hand, and dragging something white with the other, come up the steps. This vision silences* SHUKRA. *A pause follows. Another torch is seen rising behind them.*]

SHUKRA [*slowly*]. Shanta—gone. [*Pause again, looking into the starry heavens.*] *This* is the Judgment of Indra!

[THE CURTAIN]

THE SHADOWED STAR

BY

MARY MacMILLAN

THE SHADOWED STAR*

CAST

A WOMAN, *the mother.*
AN OLD WOMAN, *the grandmother.*
TWO GIRLS, *the daughters.*
A MESSENGER BOY.
A NEIGHBOUR.
ANOTHER NEIGHBOUR.

[*SCENE: A very bare room in a tenement house, uncarpeted, the boards being much worn, and from the walls the bluish whitewash has scaled away; in the front on one side is a cooking-stove, and farther back on the same side a window; on the opposite side is a door opening into a hallway; in the middle of the room there is a round, worn dining-room table, on which stands a stunted, scraggly bit of an evergreen tree; at the back of the room, near the window, stands an old-fashioned safe with perforated tin front; next it*

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a door opening into an inner room, and next it in the corner a bed, on which lies a pallid woman; another woman, very old, sits in a rocking-chair in front of the stove and rocks. There is silence for a long space, the old woman rocking and the woman on the bed giving an occasional low sigh or groan. At last the old woman speaks.]

THE OLD WOMAN. David an' Michael might be kapin' the Christmas wid us to-morrow night if we hadn't left the ould counthry. They'd never be crossin' the sea—all the many weary miles o' wetness an' fog an' cold to be kapin' it wid us here in this great house o' brick walls in a place full o' strange souls. They would never be for crossin' all that weary, cold, green wather, groanin' an' tossin' like it was the grave o' sivin thousan' divils. Ah, but it would be a black night at sea! [*She remains silent for a few minutes, staring at the stove and rocking slowly.*] If they hadn't to cross that wet, cold sea they'd maybe come. But wouldn't they be afeard o' this great city, an' would they iver find us here? Six floors up, an' they niver off the ground in their lives. What would ye be thinkin'? [*The other woman does not answer her. She then speaks petulantly.*] What would ye be thinkin'? Mary, have ye gone clane to slape? [*Turns her chair and peers around the back of it at the pallid* WOMAN *on the bed, who sighs and answers.*]

THE WOMAN. No, I on'y wisht I could. Maybe they'll come—I don't know, but father an' Michael wasn't much for thravel. [*After a pause*

and very wearily] Maybe they'll not come, yet [*slowly*], maybe I'll be kapin' the Christmas wid them there. [*The* OLD WOMAN *seems not to notice this, wandering from her question back to her memories.*]

THE OLD WOMAN. No, they'll niver be lavin' the ould land, the green land, the home land. I'm wishing I was there wid thim. [*Another pause, while she stares at the stove.*] Maybe we'd have a duck an' potatoes, an' maybe something to drink to kape us warm against the cold. An' the boys would all be dancin' an' the girls have rosy cheeks. [*There is another pause, and then a knock at the door. "Come in," the two women call, in reedy, weak voices, and a thin, slatternly Irish woman enters.*]

THE NEIGHBOUR. Good avnin' to ye; I came in to ask if I might borrow the loan o' a bit o' tay, not havin' a leaf of it left.

THE WOMAN. We have a little left, just enough we was savin' for ourselves to-night, but you're welcome to it—maybe the girls will bring some. Will ye get it for her, mother? Or she can help herself—it's in the safe. It's on the lower shelf among the cups an' saucers an' plates. [*The* OLD WOMAN *and* NEIGHBOUR *go to the safe and hunt for the tea, and do not find it readily. The safe has little in it but a few cracked and broken dishes.*]

THE NEIGHBOUR [*holding up a tiny paper bag with an ounce perhaps of tea in it.*] It's just a scrap!

THE OLD WOMAN. To be sure! We use so much tay! We're that exthravagant!

THE NEIGHBOUR. It hurts me to take it from ye—maybe I'd better not.

THE OLD WOMAN. The girls will bring more. We always have a cupboard full o' things. We're always able to lend to our neighbours.

THE NEIGHBOUR. It's in great luck, ye are. For some of us be so poor we don't know where the next bite's comin' from. An' this winter whin iverything's so high an' wages not raised, a woman can't find enough to cook for her man's dinner. It isn't that ye don't see things—oh, they're in the markets an' the shops, an' it makes yer mouth wather as ye walk along the sthrates this day before the Christmas to see the turkeys an' the ducks ye'll niver ate, an' the little pigs an' the or'nges an' bananies an' cranberries an' the cakes an' nuts an' —it's worse, I'm thinkin,' to see thim whin there's no money to buy than it was in the ould counthry, where there was nothing to buy wid the money ye didn't have.

THE WOMAN. It's all one to us poor folk whether there be things to buy or not. [*She speaks gaspingly, as one who is short of breath.*] I'm on'y thinkin' o' the clane air at home—if I could have a mornin' o' fresh sunshine—these fogs an' smoke choke me so. The girls would take me out to the counthry if they had time an' I'd get well. But they haven't time. [*She falls into a fit of coughing.*]

THE OLD WOMAN. But it's like to be bright on Christmas Day. It wouldn't iver be cloudy on Christmas Day, an' maybe even now the stars would be crapin' out an' the air all clear an' cold

an' the moon a-shinin' an' iverything so sthill an' quiet an' bleamin' an' breathless [*her voice falls almost to a whisper*], awaitin' on the Blessed Virgin. [*She goes to the window, lifts the blind, and peers out, then throws up the sash and leans far out. After a moment she pulls the sash down again and the blind and turns to those in the room with the look of pathetic disappointment in little things, of the aged.*] No, there's not a sthar, not one little twinklin' sthar, an' how'll the shepherds find their way? Iverything's dull an' black an' the clouds are hangin' down heavy an' sthill. How'll the shepherds find their way without the sthar to guide thim? [*Then almost whimpering*] An' David an' Michael will niver be crossin' that wet, black sea! An' the girls—how'll they find their way home? They'll be lost somewhere along by the hedges. Ohone, ohone!

THE NEIGHBOUR. Now, grannie, what would ye be sayin'? There's niver a hedge anywhere but granite blocks an' electric light poles an' plenty o' light in the city for thim to see all their way home. [*Then to the woman*] Ain't they late?

THE WOMAN. They're always late, an' they kape gettin' lather an' lather.

THE NEIGHBOUR. Yis, av coorse, the sthores is all open in the avnin's before Christmas.

THE WOMAN. They go so early in the mornin' an' get home so late at night, an' they're so tired.

THE NEIGHBOUR [*whiningly*]. They're lucky to be young enough to work an' not be married. I've got to go home to the childer an' give thim their

tay. Pat's gone to the saloon again, an' to-morrow bein' Christmas I misdoubt he'll be terrible dhrunk again, an' me on'y jist well from the blow in the shoulder the last time. [*She wipes her eyes and moves toward the door.*]

THE OLD WOMAN. Sthay an' kape Christmas wid us. We're goin' to have our cilebratin' to-night on Christmas Eve, the way folks do here. I like it best on Christmas Day, the way 'tis in the ould counthry, but here 'tis Christmas Eve they kape. We're waitin' for the girls to come home to start things—they knowin' how—Mary an' me on'y know how to kape Christmas Day as 'tis at home. But the girls'll soon be here, an' they'll have the three an' do the cookin' an' all, an' we'll kape up the jollity way into the night.

THE NEIGHBOUR [*looks questioningly and surprised at the* WOMAN, *whose eyes are on the mother.*] Nay, if Pat came home dhrunk an' didn't find me he'd kill me. We have all to be movin' on to our own throubles. [*She goes out, and the* OLD WOMAN *leaves the Christmas tree which she has been fingering and admiring, and sits down in the rocking-chair again. After a while she croons to herself in a high broken voice. This lasts some time, when there is the noise of a slamming door and then of footsteps approaching.*]

THE WOMAN. If I could on'y be in the counthry!

THE OLD WOMAN. Maybe that would be the girls! [*She starts tremblingly to her feet, but the steps come up to the door and go by.*] If David and

Michael was to come now an' go by—there bein' no sthar to guide thim!

THE WOMAN. Nay, mother, 'twas the shepherds that was guided by the sthar an' to the bed o' the Blessed Babe.

THE OLD WOMAN. Aye, so 'twas. What be I thinkin' of? The little Blessed Babe! [*She smiles and sits staring at the stove again for a little.*] But they could not find Him to-night. 'Tis so dark an' no sthars shinin'. [*After another pause*] An' what would shepherds do in a ghreat city? 'Twould be lost they'd be, quicker than in any bog. Think ye, Mary, that the boys would be hootin' thim an' the p'lice maybe, would want to be aristin' thim for loitherin'. They'd niver find the Blessed Babe, an' they'd have to be movin' on. [*Another pause, and then there is a sound of approaching footsteps again. The* OLD WOMAN *grasps the arms of her chair and leans forward intently listening.*]—That would sure be the girls this time! [*But again the footsteps go by. The* OLD WOMAN *sighs.*] Ah, but 'tis weary waitin'! [*There is another long pause.*] 'Twas on that day that David an' me was plighted —a brave Christmas Day wid a shinin' sun an' a sky o' blue wid fair, white clouds. An' David an' me met at the early mass in the dark o' the frosty mornin' afore the sun rose—an' there was all day good times an' a duck for dinner and puddin's an' a party at the O'Brady's in the evenin', whin David an' me danced. Ah, but he was a beautiful dancer, an' me, too—I was as light on my feet as a fairy. [*She begins to croon an old dance tune and*

hobbles to her feet, and, keeping time with her head, tries a grotesque and feeble sort of dancing. Her eyes brighten and she smiles proudly.] Aye, but I danced like a fairy, an' there was not another couple so sprightly an' handsome in all the country. [*She tires, and, looking pitiful and disappointed, hobbles back to her chair, and drops into it again.*] Ah, but I be old now, and the strength fails me. [*She falls into silence for a few minutes.*] 'Twas the day before the little man, the little white dove, my next Christmas that Michael was born—little son! [*There is a moment's pause, and then the pallid* WOMAN *on the bed has a violent fit of coughing.*]

THE WOMAN. Mother, could ye get me a cup o' wather? If the girls was here to get me a bite to ate, maybe it would kape the breath in me the night.

THE OLD WOMAN [*starts and stares at her daughter, as if she hardly comprehended the present reality. She gets up and goes over to the window under which there is a pail full of water. She dips some out in a tin cup and carries it to her bed.*] Ye should thry to get up an' move about some, so ye can enjoy the Christmas threat. 'Tis bad bein' sick on Christmas. Thry, now, Mary, to sit up a bit. The girls'll be wantin' ye to be merry wid the rest av us.

THE WOMAN [*looking at her mother with a sad wistfulness*]. I wouldn't spoil things for the girls if I could help. Maybe, mother, if ye'd lift me a little I could sit up. [*The* OLD WOMAN *tugs at her, and she herself tries hard to get into a sitting posture, but after some effort and panting for breath, she falls*

back again. After a pause for rest, she speaks gaspingly.] Maybe I'll feel sthronger lather whin the girls come home—they could help me—[*with the plaint of longing in her voice*] they be so late! [*After another pause*] Maybe I'll be sthrong again in the mornin'—if I'd had a cup of coffee.—Maybe I could get up—an' walk about—an' do the cookin'. [*There is a knock at the door, and again they call, "Come in," in reedy, weak voices. There enters a little messenger boy in a ragged overcoat that reaches almost to his heels. His eyes are large and bright, his face pale and dirty, and he is fearfully tired and worn.*]

THE WOMAN. Why, Tim, boy, come in. Sit ye down an' rest, ye're lookin' weary.

THE OLD WOMAN. Come to the stove, Timmie, man, an' warm yourself. We always kape a warm room an' a bright fire for visitors.

THE BOY. I was awful cold an' hungry an' I come home to get somethin' to eat before I started out on another trip, but my sisters ain't home from the store yit, an' the fire's gone out in the stove an' the room's cold as outside. I thought maybe ye'd let me come in here an' git warm.

THE OLD WOMAN. Poor orphan! Poor lamb! To be shure ye shall get warm by our sthove.

THE BOY. The cars are so beastly col' an' so crowded a feller mostly has to stand on the back platform. [*The* OLD WOMAN *takes him by the shoulder and pushes him toward the stove, but he resists.*]

THE BOY. No, thank ye—I don't want to go so

near yet; my feet's all numb an' they allays hurt so when they warms up fast.

THE OLD WOMAN. Thin sit ye down off from the sthove. [*Moves the rocking chair farther away from the stove for him.*]

THE BOY. If ye don't mind I'd rather stand on 'em 'til they gets a little used to it. They been numb off an' on mos' all day.

THE WOMAN. Soon as yer sisters come, Timmie, ye'd betther go to bed—'tis the best place to get warm.

THE BOY. I can't—I got most a three-hour trip yet. I won't get home any 'fore midnight if I don't get lost, and maybe I'll get lost—I did once out there. I've got to take a box o' 'Merican Beauty roses to a place eight mile out, an' the house ain't on the car track, but nearly a mile off, the boss said. I wisht they could wait till mornin', but the orders was they just got to get the roses to-night. You see, out there they don' have no gas goin' nights when there's a moon, an' there'd ought to be a moon to-night, on'y the clouds is so thick there ain't no light gets through.

THE OLD WOMAN. There's no sthar shinin' to-night, Tim. [*She shakes her head ominously. She goes to the window for the second time, opens it as before, and looks out. Shutting the window, she comes back and speaks slowly and sadly.*] Niver a sthar. An' the shepherds will be havin' a hard time, Tim, like you, findin' their way.

THE BOY. Shepherds? In town? What shepherds?

THE WOMAN. She means the shepherds on Christmas Eve that wint to find the Blessed Babe, Jesus.

THE OLD WOMAN. 'Tis Christmas Eve, Timmie; ye haven't forgot that, have ye?

THE BOY. You bet I ain't. I know pretty well when Christmas is comin', by the way I got to hustle, an' the size of the boxes I got to carry. Seems as if my legs an' me would like to break up pardnership. I got to work till midnight every night, an' I'm so sleepy I drop off in the cars whenever I get a seat. An' the girls is at the store so early an' late they don't get time to cook me nothin' to eat.

THE WOMAN. Be you hungry, Timmie?

THE BOY [*diffidently and looking at the floor*]. No, I ain't hungry now.

THE WOMAN. Be ye shure, Timmie?

THE BOY. Oh, I kin go till I git home.

THE WOMAN. Mother, can't you find something for him to eat?

THE OLD WOMAN. To be shure, to be shure. [*Bustling about*] We always kapes a full cupboard to thrate our neighbours wid whin they comes in. [*She goes to the empty safe and fusses in it to find something. She pretends to be very busy, and then glances around at the boy with a sly look and a smile.*] Ah, Timmie, lad, what would ye like to be havin', now? If you had the wish o' yer heart for yer Christmas dinner an' a good fairy to set it all afore ye? Ye'd be wishin' maybe, for a fine roast duck to begin wid, in its own gravies an' some apple

sauce to go wid it; an' ye'd be thinkin' o' a little bit o' pig nicely browned an' a plate of potaties; an' the little fairy woman would be bringin' yer puddin's an' nuts an' apples an' a dish o' the sweetest tay. [*The* BOY *smiles rather ruefully.*]

THE WOMAN. But, mother, you're not gettin' Tim something to ate.

THE BOY. She's makin' me mouth water all right. [*The* OLD WOMAN *goes back to her search, but again turns about with a cunning look, and says to the boy:*]

THE OLD WOMAN. Maybe ye'll meet that little fairy woman out there in the counthry road where ye're takin' the roses! [*Nods her head knowingly, turning to the safe again.*] Here's salt an here's pepper an here's mustard an' a crock full o' sugar, an', oh! Tim, here's some fine cold bacon—fine, fat, cold bacon—an' here's half a loaf o' white wheat bread! Why, Timmie, lad, that's just the food to make boys fat! Ye'll grow famously on it. 'Tis a supper, whin ye add to it a dhrop o' iligant milk, that's fit for a king. [*She bustles about with great show of being busy and having much to prepare. Puts the plate of cold bacon upon the table where stands the stunted bit of an evergreen tree, then brings the half-loaf of bread and cuts it into slices, laying pieces of bacon on the slices of bread. Then she pours out a glass of milk from a dilapidated and broken pitcher in the safe and brings it to the table, the* BOY *all the while watching her hungrily. At last he says rather apologetically to the* WOMAN:]

THE BOY. I ain't had nothin' since a wiener-wurst at eleven o'clock.

THE OLD WOMAN. Now, dhraw up, Timmie; boy, an' ate yer fill; ye're more thin welcome.

[*The boy does not sit down, but stands by the table and eats a slice of bread and bacon, drinking from the glass of milk occasionally.*]

THE WOMAN. Don't they niver give ye nothin' to ate at the gran' houses when ye'd be takin' the roses?

THE BOY. Not them. They'd as soon think o' feedin' a telephone or an automobile as me.

THE WOMAN. But don't they ask ye in to get warm whin ye've maybe come so far?

THE BOY. No, they don't seem to look at me 'zacly like a caller. They generally steps out long enough to sign the receipt-book an' shut the front door behin' 'em so as not to let the house get col' the length o' time I'm standin' there. Well, I'm awful much obleeged to ye. Now, I got to be movin' on.

THE OLD WOMAN. Sthop an' cilebrate the Christmas wid us. We ain't started to do nothin' yet because the girls haven't come—they know how [*nodding her head*]—an' they're goin' to bring things—all kinds o' good things to ate an' a branch of rowan berries—ah, boy, a great branch o' rowan wid scarlet berries shinin' [*gesticulating and with gleaming eyes*], an' we'll all be merry an' kape it up late into the night.

THE BOY [*in a little fear of her*]. I guess it's pretty late now. I got to make that trip an' I guess when I get home I'll be so sleepy I'll jus' tumble in. Ye've been awful good to me, an' it's

the first time I been warm to-day. Good-bye. [*He starts toward the door, but the* OLD WOMAN *follows him and speaks to him coaxingly.*]

THE OLD WOMAN. Ah, don't ye go, Michael, lad! Now, bide wid us a bit. [*The* BOY, *surprised at the name, looks queerly at the* OLD WOMAN, *who then stretches out her arms to him, and says beseechingly:*] Ah, boy, ah, Mike, bide wid us, now ye've come! We've been that lonesome widout ye!

THE BOY [*frightened and shaking his head*]. I've got to be movin'.

THE OLD WOMAN. No, Michael, little lamb, no!

THE BOY [*almost terrified, watching her with staring eyes, and backing out*]. I got to go! [*The* BOY *goes out, and the* OLD WOMAN *breaks into weeping, totters over to her old rocking-chair and drops into it, rocks to and fro, wailing to herself.*]

THE OLD WOMAN. Oh, to have him come an' go again, my little Michael, my own little lad!

THE WOMAN. Don't ye, dearie; now, then, don't ye! 'Twas not Michael, but just our little neighbour boy, Tim. Ye know, poor lamb, now if ye'll thry to remember, that father an' Michael is gone to the better land an' us is left.

THE OLD WOMAN. Nay, nay, 'tis the fairies that took thim an' have thim now, kapin' thim an' will not ever give thim back.

THE WOMAN. Whisht, mother! Spake not of the little folk on the Holy Night! [*Crosses herself.*] Have ye forgot the time o' all the year it is? Now, dhry yer eyes, dearie, an' thry to be cheerful like 'fore the girls be comin' home. [*A noise is heard.*

the banging of a door and footsteps.] Thim be the girls now, shure they be comin' at last. [*But the sound of footsteps dies away.*] But they'll be comin' soon. [*Wearily, but with the inveterate hope.*]

[*The two women relapse into silence again, which is undisturbed for a few minutes. Then there is a knock at the door, and together in quavering, reedy voices, they call, "Come in," as before. There enters a tall, big, broad-shouldered woman with a cold, discontented, hard look upon the face that might have been handsome some years back; still, in her eyes, as she looks at the pallid* WOMAN *on the bed, there is something that denotes a softness underneath it all.*]

THE OLD WOMAN. Good avnin' to ye! We're that pleased to see our neighbours!

THE NEIGHBOUR [*without paying any attention to the* OLD WOMAN, *but entirely addressing the* WOMAN *on the bed.*] How's yer cough?

THE WOMAN. Oh, it's jist the same—maybe a little betther. If I could on'y get to the counthry! But the girls must be workin'—they haven't time to take me. Sit down, won't ye? [*The* NEIGHBOUR *goes to the bed and sits down on the foot of it.*]

THE NEIGHBOUR. I'm 'most dead, I'm so tired. I did two washin's to-day—went out and did one this mornin' and then my own after I come home this afternoon. I jus' got through sprinklin' it an' I'll iron to-morrow.

THE WOMAN. Not on Christmas Day!

THE NEIGHBOUR [*with a sneer*]. Christmas

Day! Did ye hear 'bout the Beckers? Well, they was all put out on the sidewalk this afternoon. Becker's been sick, ye know, an' ain't paid his rent an' his wife's got a two weeks' old baby. It sort o' stunned Mis' Becker, an' she sat on one of the mattresses out there an' wouldn't move, an' nobody couldn't do nothin' with her. But they ain't the only ones has bad luck—Smith, the painter, fell off a ladder an' got killed. They took him to the hospital, but it wasn't no use—his head was all mashed in. His wife's got them five boys an' Smith never saved a cent, though he warn't a drinkin' man. It's a good thing Smith's children is boys—they can make their livin' easier!

THE WOMAN [*smiling faintly*]. Ain't ye got no cheerful news to tell? It's Christmas Eve, ye know.

THE NEIGHBOUR. Christmas Eve don't seem to prevent people from dyin' an' bein' turned out o' house an' home. Did ye hear how bad the dipthery is? They say as how if it gits much worse they'll have to close the school in our ward. Two o' the Homan children's dead with it. The first one wasn't sick but two days, an' they say his face all turned black 'fore he died. But it's a good thing they're gone, for the Homans ain't got enough to feed the other six. Did ye hear 'bout Jim Kelly drinkin' again? Swore off for two months, an' then took to it harder'n ever—perty near killed the baby one night.

THE WOMAN [*with a wan, beseeching smile*]. Won't you please not tell me any more? It just breaks me heart.

THE NEIGHBOUR [*grimly*]. I ain't got no other kind o' news to tell. I s'pose I might's well go home.

THE WOMAN. No, don't ye go. I like to have ye here when ye're kinder.

THE NEIGHBOUR [*fingering the bedclothes and smoothing them over the* WOMAN]. Well, it's gettin' late, an' I guess ye ought to go to sleep.

THE WOMAN. Oh, no, I won't go to slape till the girls come. They'll bring me somethin' to give me strength. If they'd on'y come soon.

THE NEIGHBOUR. Ye ain't goin' to set up 'til they git home?

THE OLD WOMAN. That we are. We're kapin' the cilebratin' till they come.

THE NEIGHBOUR. What celebratin'?

THE OLD WOMAN. Why, the Christmas, to be shure. We're goin' to have high jinks to-night. In the ould counthry 'tis always Christmas Day, but here 'tis begun on Christmas Eve, an' we're on'y waitin' for the girls, because they know how to fix things betther nor Mary an' me.

THE NEIGHBOUR [*staring*]. But ain't they workin' in the store?

THE OLD WOMAN. Yes, but they're comin' home early to-night.

THE NEIGHBOUR [*laughing ironically*]. Don't ye fool yerselves. Why, they've got to work harder to-night than any in the whole year.

THE WOMAN [*wistfully*]. But they did say they'd thry to come home early.

THE NEIGHBOUR. The store's all crowded to-

night. Folks 'at's got money to spend never remembers it till the last minute. If they didn't have none they'd be thinkin' 'bout it long ahead. Well, I got to be movin.' I wouldn't stay awake, if I was you.

THE OLD WOMAN. Sthay and kape the Christmas wid us! We'll be havin' high jinks by an' by. Sthay, now, an' help us wid our jollity!

THE NEIGHBOUR. Nay, I left my children in bed, an' I got to go back to 'em. An' I got to get some rest myself—I got that ironin' ahead o' me in the mornin'. You folks better get yer own rest. [*She rises and goes to the door.*]

THE OLD WOMAN [*beamingly*]. David an' Michael's comin'. [*The* NEIGHBOUR *stands with her back against the door and her hand on the knob, staring at the* OLD WOMAN.]

THE OLD WOMAN [*smiling rapturously*]. Yis, we're goin' to have a gran' time. [*The* NEIGHBOUR *looks puzzled and fearful and troubled, first at the* WOMAN *and then at the* OLD WOMAN. *Finally, without a word, she opens the door and goes out.*]

THE OLD WOMAN [*going about in a tottering sort of dance*]. David an' Michael's comin' an' the shepherds for the fairies will show thim the way.

THE WOMAN. If the girls would on'y come! If they'd give me somethin' so as I wouldn't be so tired!

THE OLD WOMAN. There's niver a sthar an' there's nobody to give thim a kind word an' the counthry roads are dark an' foul, but they've got the little folk to guide thim! An' whin they reach

the city—the poor, lonesome shepherds from the hills!—they'll find naught but coldness an' hardness an' hurry. [*Questioningly.*] Will the fairies show thim the way? Fairies' eyes be used to darkness, but can they see where it is black night in one corner an' a blaze o' light in another? [*She goes to the window for the third time, opens it and leans far out for a long time, then turns about and goes on in her monotone, closing the window.—She seems by this time quite to have forgotten the presence of the pallid* WOMAN *on the bed, who has closed her eyes, and lies like one dead.*]

THE OLD WOMAN. Nay, there's niver a sthar, an' the clouds are hangin' heavier an' lower an' the flakes o' snow are fallin'. Poor little folk guidin' thim poor lost shepherds, leadin' thim by the hand so gently because there's no others to be kind to thim, an' bringin' thim to the manger o' the Blessed Babe. [*She comes over to her rocking-chair and again sits down in it, rocks slowly to and fro, nodding her head in time to the motion.*] Poor little mite of a babe, so cold an' unwelcome an' forgotten save by the silly ould shepherds from the hills! The silly ould shepherds from the strength o' the hills, who are comin' through the darkness in the lead o' the little folk! [*She speaks slower and lower, and finally drops into a quiet crooning—it stops and the* OLD WOMAN *has fallen asleep.*]

[CURTAIN.]

[*While the curtain is down the pallid, sick* WOMAN *upon the bed dies, the* OLD WOMAN *being*

asleep does not notice the slight struggle with death. The fire has gone out in the stove, and the light in the lamp, and the stage is in complete darkness when the two girls come stumbling in. They are too tired to speak, too weary to show surprise that the occupants of the room are not awake. They fumble about, trying to find matches in the darkness, and finally discover them and a candle in the safe. They light the candle and place it upon the table by the scraggy little evergreen-tree. They turn about and discern their grandmother asleep in the rocking-chair. Hurriedly they turn to the bed and discover their mother lying there dead. For a full minute they stand gazing at her, the surprise, wonder, awe, misery increasing in their faces; then with screams they run to the bed, throw themselves on their knees and bury their faces, sobbing, in the bedclothes at the WOMAN'S *feet.*]

[THE CURTAIN]